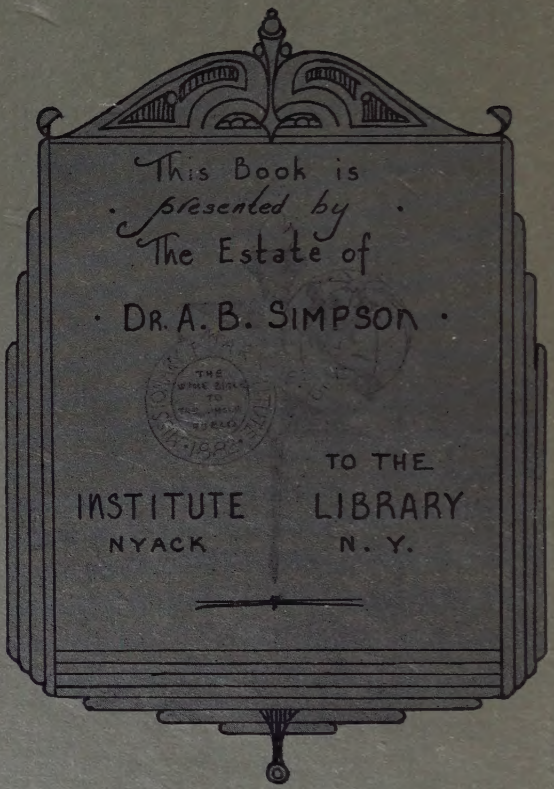
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The Bible History of Answered Prayer

BY

William Campbell Scofield

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PREFACE

These are the days wherein the inculcation of religious truth by *story* is in vogue.

With the mass of readers the creations of a vivid imagination, not always true to nature, nor always in harmony with the inspired word, have taken the place of more solid and serious discourse on themes whose foundation is the Eternal Verities.

The *real* rather than the *fanciful, facts* rather than *fables* are the things God has provided for the spiritual nurture and upbuilding of those who would make their calling and election sure.

Nevertheless, a considerable portion of the Holy Scriptures is made up of striking incidents in the lives of individuals, and in the history of nations, which enliven the text, and thrill the reader equal to any tale of the imagination.

Indeed, the full Bible record makes an entrancing story-book, wherein all the characters are *real* personages, and every incident can be relied upon as not only true to nature, but also in harmony with the historical fact.

Perhaps there is no one feature of practical religion in which men have a more genuine and abiding interest, or in regard to which they are more willing to receive instruction, than the prayer feature in all its numerous phases. A thousand questions relating to this subject are asked, for which a Scriptural solution is desired; and hence, a volume that would help to such a solution would naturally receive a generous welcome.

The Bible history of *answered* prayer, is but a long succession of thrilling incidents, which, with their historical settings, tell a true tale and furnish a mental stimulus that has in it no hurtful ingredient. Besides, these incidents embrace almost every phase of prayer, and every variety of answer.

From the title-page of this volume it will be inferred that no attempt is to be made to consider what might be denominated the *doctrine* of prayer—the testimony of the Holy Scriptures in respect to the general subject of Communion with God.

Samples of prayer, brief, earnest, importunate, are numerous throughout these writings. At least one third of the Psalms are interwoven with petitions in the form of plaint, entreaty, be-

seeching; and it may be presumed that, ordinarily, such petitions came up with acceptance before God.

But while there may have been, and doubtless were, answers to many of these petitions, they are not found in the record, and so do not come within the purview of this volume.

It will doubtless be to many a great surprise to find that, with scarcely an exception, all the notable prayers recorded in the Bible, have written over against them the answers vouchsafed.

As much the larger part of the material used in the compilation, is, what it purports to be, a transcript from the sacred volume, a liberal use of quotation marks has seemed undesirable. Also, Scriptural references, in parenthesis, have been largely omitted.

The Scripture phrase, than which there is nothing more graphic, or luminous, or impressive, has been preserved not only in the prayers and responses thereto, but in their settings likewise.

No undue liberties have been taken with the text itself, all material omissions being indicated in the usual way. The filling in, which is comparatively of small moment, will be readily distinguished from that which is inspired.

It has been difficult to decide, where the

prayer was of unusual length, whether any omission would be justifiable. The integrity of some of the longest prayers seemed to forbid any abbreviation. Hence the asterisk has been seldom used.

It will be seen that, in the summing up, but small space has been reserved for what might be termed the *morale* of the volume, attention being directed only to a few of the more striking features of the inspired narrative. He who has, through all the centuries, been magnifying His Word above all His name (Ps. 138: 2), may surely be trusted to suggest and impress the very many serious and saving lessons of this narrative.

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BIBLE HISTORY OF ANSWERED PRAYER

I. ABRAM

"And there Abram called on the name of the Lord." (Gen. 13:4.)

Assuredly, this is not the opening chapter in the history of answered prayer.

Abram and others before him had prayed, and had received answers. But here at Bethel, a place to be made memorable as time went on, the *Bible record* of answered prayer seemingly begins. Calling on the name of the Lord was then, as it has been ever since, an act of religious worship, from which prayer and praise—making known of requests unto God with thanksgiving—were inseparable. Abram had been at this *place* before—it was the place where his tent had been at the beginning, the place of the altar which he had made at the first, *his* place of worship, the house of God, Bethel, so named at a subsequent period by Jacob, because of his own blessed experiences there. Doubtless, Abram's

heart was suffused with grateful emotions, in view of his safe return from a long sojourn in the land of Egypt, where he had been exposed to many perils and had endured sore humiliation, without, however, suffering any abatement of his worldly prosperity. Flocks, herds, and tents, shared by his kinsman Lot, had so multiplied, that the home land *was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together.*

Hence, mingled with his rejoicings and thanksgivings for mercies past, there were anxieties for what would be in the near future. He foresaw what must needs be the result of this *overcrowding*, if, indeed, he had not discovered signs that the trouble had already begun. It was easy to see, that, if the ferment of conflicting interests should continue, there would be a strife between the herdsmen that would rupture the peace of the overgrown household, and bring disrepute upon the principals.

It is more than probable, it is almost certain, that Abram's calling upon God at this juncture had to do with this matter. The result was such disclosures of God's will, as prepared the way for that magnanimous proposal on Abram's part, by which further friction was saved and a friendly dissolution of the partnership interests

effected. And this proposed adjustment was, we believe, the answer God vouchsafed to Abram's prayer. All the incidents that followed show, that, to Abram at least, remarkable wisdom and grace were imparted. We may be sure it was no easy thing for the man whose interests were undoubtedly the larger, and whose age and character alike entitled him to the priority of choice, to surrender it gracefully to the inferior man with his subordinate interests. So the closely connecting link between the calling on the name of the Lord and the answer is apparent, and it excites our wonder and admiration.

Surely the Bible record of answered prayer begins well!

II. ABRAM

Subsequent to the extraordinary exertion required in the rescue of Lot and his fellow townsmen from their captivity, Abram had apparently experienced a physical reaction with a corresponding depression of spirits, that led to fears and forebodings quite unusual in him.

God now makes the advances. As if to draw him out in prayer before ministering to his mental despondency, His word came unto him in a

vision, saying, "Fear not Abram: *I* am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Being thus encouraged to unbosom himself, Abram said, "Lord God, what wilt thou give me (that will afford me any comfort) seeing *I* go *childless?* . . . Behold to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in mine house is mine heir." (Gen. 15:1–3.)

It was easy to see from this response, what was weighing upon his spirits—the sore disappointment in respect to an heir, which, in his exhausted condition, had become acute.

Now that the secret is out, the way is prepared, as never before, for the most gracious treatment on God's part. "And, behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying, this shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, so shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord and He counted it to him for righteousness."

But this revelation did not stop with what was personal to himself or his son. Disclosures were made as to the future of several gen-

erations of his descendants, including *the horror of great darkness*, in the which, for a period of four hundred years, they would be strangers in a land that was not theirs, where they would suffer grievous oppressions until the time of deliverance came. Then they would come out with great substance, and would repossess the land which God had covenanted to give them for their inheritance, including the very spot where Abram was now holding communion with Him.

III. ABRAHAM

"And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before Thee." (Gen. 17: 18.)

Abraham, notwithstanding his noble qualities of mind and heart, and his peerless faith in a covenant-keeping God, did yet fall considerably short of ideal perfection. Like many other good men, he had his weak side, and from that side he had, on more than one occasion, been successfully approached.

He had exposed himself to just censure for having swerved, not only from the path of true wisdom, but also from that strict moral code for which our greater light allows of no infringement. In consequence, he found himself and

those nearest to him, once and again involved in perplexities and distresses from which it was difficult, if not impossible, to find a way of escape.

Between the son of promise and the son of compliance, he sees a conflict impending which will surely lead to a sundering of family ties.

In his treatment of both he would pursue a course that would involve the least hardship for all concerned, and especially for the one, who, through no fault of his own, is put at a disadvantage. Wherefore his appeal to Him who holds in His hands all issues, and can so overrule the weak compliances, the follies, and even the sins of His people, as to fend off much of the evil that would naturally result from them. "O that Ishmael might live before Thee."

And God said . . . as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; Behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But in doing this for Ishmael He allows of no infringement of Isaac's priority of privilege under the covenant of promise: *My covenant will I establish with Isaac which Sarah bare unto thee.*

The wisdom and scope of God's gracious

arrangements for answering the prayers of His people are such that there can never be any impairment of His covenant engagements. His plans embrace all the blessings He has in store for all classes and conditions of men through all time; and there can never be a jar in the machinery of His providence. Moreover, He has caused it to be understood, that prayer has ever been an essential part of that machinery. The established law of sequence is, "Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you."

IV. ABRAHAM

"And Abraham drew near and said, wilt Thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

(1) And the Lord said, if I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, behold now. I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord which am but dust and ashes; peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty, wilt Thou destroy all the city for lack of five?

(2) And He said, if I find forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said. peradventure there shall be forty found there?

(3) And He said I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, Oh, let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall be thirty found there?

(4) And He said, I will not do it if I find thirty there.

And he said, behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, peradventure there shall be twenty found there?

(5) And He said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there?

(6) And He said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake." (Gen. 18: 23–33.)

This prayer of six distinct petitions and as

many answers is, in very many respects, the most remarkable one in all the Bible record. It is as remarkable for what was unspoken, but written between the lines, as for what was expressed. It is remarkable for its argumentative feature, and for the courageous, yet deferential, approaches to the throne of grace, as well as for the condescension of Him who heareth prayer, and who, seemingly, takes no offense at the persistent advances—the larger and yet larger drafts made upon His compassion. It is remarkable, too, in that the appeal for the imperiled city, was not reenforced by any extenuating circumstance in the character or conduct of its citizens. God had been at great pains to authenticate the reports as to their rampant wickedness, and His embassage had found no ground for a recommendation to mercy. The seething corruption had overpast the extremest limit of the divine sufferance; and yet, the opportunity for intercessory prayer was not cut off. Abraham should be apprised of the impending calamity, and should have full opportunity for the most powerful plea the case would admit of.

Abraham's chief anxiety was, no doubt, for his kinsman Lot and his immediate household,

numbering, it may be, ten souls in all; but he may have thought, that in so large a community there might be other righteous men, and so he embraced in his plea, at first, the larger number.

Then, having secured so readily what he had asked, fearing, apparently, that the number of righteous men would fall short, he asks a larger boon, which, being granted, he grows more bold and asks yet more and more, until, doubtless, he thinks he has compassed his main object and has made sure that Lot and his household are safe. And they all might have come out alive, under the concession: *I will not destroy it for ten's sake.*

The saying of the angels, "Hast thou any besides? son-in-law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast, bring them out of this place," showed that the answer to Abraham's prayer embraced all the objects of his chief solicitude. He was heard in that he feared, even though the skeptical members of Lot's household perished in the awful overthrow. A remnant was saved—saved by measures which might be characterized as rude; for, when Lot lingered, as if loth to depart, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two

daughters; . . . and brought him forth, and set him without the city, bidding him in no gentle tones, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain. Escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Nay, it could not be, it *was* not to be, that the righteous should be as the wicked: the Judge of all the earth would do right.

Wherefore, it is written, as the realized answer to Abraham's prayer, "When God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." (Gen. 19:29.) And again it is written: "God . . . turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked." (2 Peter 2:6, 7.)

V. ABRAHAM

"So Abraham prayed unto God: And God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid servants." (Gen. 20:17.)

Abraham had gone toward the south country,

and was sojourning in Gerar, where Abimelech was king, and where occurred one of the most surprising episodes in his eventful career.

His own account of the matter, as given subsequently to Abimelech, who had reproached him for the deception he had practiced and for its evil consequences, was in these words: "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet, indeed, she is my sister; the daughter of my father, but not of my mother, and she became my wife." This was a very humiliating confession for a man of Abraham's great reputation for nobility of character and honorable dealing with his fellow men!

Abimelech's reproaches were none too severe; and Abraham must have been very much ashamed, as he considered the trouble he had brought, not only upon himself, but upon the royal household, whose head, evidently a man of honorable intentions, could say, God himself being witness, "In the integrity of my heart, and innocency of my hands, have I done this." Abraham and Sarah would have been entirely safe under the protection of so high-minded a ruler. But there had been a divine interposition

in behalf of all the parties to this comedy of errors. Abimelech was informed in a dream by night, as to the real situation, and was directed what to do, and what not to do, in extricating himself from the unpleasant dilemma in which he and his household had been placed, largely through another's fault. The steps indicated were promptly taken. Recompense was made to Abraham in a gift of sheep, and oxen, and men-servants and women-servants; while to Sarah, who had been restored to her husband, was given a thousand pieces of silver, accompanied by a delicate reproof for the part she had taken in a transaction from which so many had suffered. Abraham, deeply penitent, we may hope, for his own fault, gladly *prays* for him whom he has wronged. God *hears* and *heals* all wounds; and the unpleasant incident is closed.

VI. ABRAHAM

"And Abraham called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God." (Gen. 21:33.)

For *what* did he call on the name of the Lord? And *how* was he answered?

He was sojourning in the land of Philistia many days, but no explanation is given as to the reason why.

We may suppose some unrevealed purpose of God had brought him thither. The place seemed well chosen for a religious retreat, where there might be communion with God, holy meditation on His promises, and a calling to remembrance of what there had been in his own past experiences in the line of a fulfilment of those promises, with revealings as to what remains unfulfilled. We may not know of a certainty what was passing through Abraham's mind at this important juncture—what of rejoicing and thanksgiving on the one hand, or of fore-castings and anxieties on the other as to what should befall him in the near future.

But, whatever was revealed to or concealed from Abraham, God knew that much calling upon Him was just then the thing most needed. For, he was on the threshold of the sorest trial of his life—the offering up of Isaac upon the sacrificial altar.

There needed to be an extraordinary reviving of all his spiritual graces, a wonderful unfolding of the significance and scope of the divine purposes regarding himself and the heirship's succession to the promises, in order that there might be no halting or faltering when the

supreme test of his loyalty to God should be applied.

"*Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.*"

Could Abraham have borne himself as he did, while passing through this fiery ordeal, except as his strength had been mightily reenforced by communion with God, antecedent to the trial?

The marvel disappears when we connect with the trial the previous calling upon the Lord, THE EVERLASTING GOD—a title new and unused before, but one of deep significance to him whose faith was to be subjected to the utmost possible strain—and, as the marvel begins to dissolve, the *answer* to prayer is revealed in that part of the record which immediately follows.

"*And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went to the place of which God had told him . . . And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his*

son; and he took the fire in his hand and a knife: and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, my father . . . behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, my son God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering: . . . And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son." And we exclaim—*How could he!* How could he have done all he did, and *as* he did, so promptly, so calmly? Was not the *support* he experienced from the Everlasting God—a support that came through some special revelation of the greater sacrifice that He himself would make, in the fulness of time, on that same mountain; a seeing of Christ's day, and the significance of all that was to come from his death upon the cross; a revelation of the mystery that had been hid from human comprehension from the foundation of the world—*that which* gave such steadiness to Abraham, saving him from any faltering of purpose, from any questioning

of the wisdom and goodness of God, from any giving way to his emotions, from any omission of any of the distressing details of the sacrifice? Was not this the answer to prayer? If not, then what was it?

You will perhaps say, "It is all a surmise." Be it so: yet is there in the surmise anything unnatural or irrational? Is it not precisely what, under the circumstances, might have been expected? In all history, was there ever an occasion, where there was a more imperative necessity for the support of the Everlasting God, in answer to prayer?

VII. ELIEZER

And he, the eldest servant of Abraham's house, presumably Eliezer of Damascus, the steward of whom mention is made in Gen. 15: 2, a God-fearing and in every way worthy man, who could be trusted with the execution of a most difficult and delicate commission, with no fear that he would either bungle or fail in its execution—this man, at the critical moment resorts to prayer, and says: "O Lord God of my master Abraham . . . send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master.

"Behold, I stand by the well . . . and the

daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say—after using my best judgment in making an election from all the damsels gathered at the well—let down thy pitcher I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, drink; and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master." (Gen. 24:12–14, 21.)

Abraham had put this servant under oath to fulfil a weighty commission, no less than the selection of a suitable person to be the wife of his son Isaac, the heir of all the promises, and the inheritor of all his large wealth.

There had doubtless been some conference between father and son in regard to this matter, in which the son had waived his own right of choice in favor of the servant who enjoyed their entire confidence. As a chosen instrument in God's hand, they believed his cool judgment and prayerful spirit would insure against an unwise selection.

And it is evident that Eliezer felt deeply the pressure of his personal responsibility and was fully persuaded that a good wife was of the Lord.

Though, doubtless, praying from the first and all along for guidance, yet now that the time has come for decision, his prayer takes on a more definite shape, and the words are such as, no doubt, were suggested by Him who inspires all prevailing prayer.

The circumstances were such as required an *immediate* answer to prayer; and the answer came promptly, and was, in every detail, the complement of the prayer.

"And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebecca came out . . . with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, . . . and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher and came up. And the servant ran to meet her and said, Let me I pray thee drink a little water from thy pitcher. And she said, Drink my lord: and she hasted, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water also for thy camels until they have done drinking. And she hasted and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw, and drew for all the camels. And the man, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, whether the Lord had

made his journey prosperous or not." But, evidently, he was not long in doubt, for it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, the man took a golden earring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold, and bestowed them upon her.

Other corroborating evidences following, he presently arrives at a full persuasion. And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the Lord. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left desolate my master of His mercy and His truth: *I, being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.* And from that house on the following day, went forth Rebecca, amid the blessings of her kindred, to become "the mother of thousands of millions." It may be remarked, in passing, that while there are other successful ways of selecting and securing a wife, there is surely no better way than this one, where prayer was so much in evidence, and was so signally answered.

VIII. ISAAC

"And Isaac went out to *meditate* in the field at the eventide." (Gen. 24:63.) The marginal, and what we choose to think the more exact

reading of the original is, to *pray,* instead of *meditate.*

And there can be no doubt, that, not only Eliezer, but Abraham and Isaac also, were doing a great deal of praying about these days. There was a very notable agreement between these men, a fulfilling of the condition recognized and emphasized by Christ when he said to His disciples, "If any two of you are *agreed* as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." This agreement in prayer is ever to be accounted a reenforcement for every individual petitioner.

During all the time of Eliezer's absence, no doubt Abraham and Isaac were asking for the one thing which had come to be "an urgent, pressing case," admitting of no further postponement.

In order to the fulfilment of promises to both father and son, there must be a suitable wife found for the latter. Isaac was naturally deeply solicitous as to the outcome of Eliezer's mission.

He was giving his mind to the subject, and had for a little, withdrawn himself from human companionship.

Perhaps he had calculated the time that would

be required for the accomplishment of said mission, provided it was successful, and was wondering what might be the style of the elect woman, and whether she would be the realization of his own ideal. Not unlikely he had grown nervous as the time drew near, and so was wandering somewhat aimlessly in the fields, yet going in the direction where he would be likely to get the earliest view of Eliezer and his retinue, who, meanwhile, were making all haste homeward, and were as anxious to tell the good news as the home friends were to hear it.

"And Isaac lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming." Another pair of eyes were eagerly scanning the various objects of interest. "And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off her camel. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife, *and he loved her*"—a case of love at first sight—a consummation that was the exact answer to all the praying that had been going on during the days of waiting.

IX. ISAAC

Twenty years had passed since Isaac, at forty, had taken Rebecca to wife, and there were, as

yet, "no tokens of paternity to cheer his heart. The child of promise continues to be denied." The circumstance was one of serious import, and exceedingly trying to Isaac's faith; for, did not the fulfilment of all the promises made to his father and confirmed to himself, hinge thereon?

"*And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, for she was barren*" (Gen. 25:21), using, it may be, just such arguments in his prayer, as Abraham had used before him under similar circumstances. "And the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebecca, his wife, conceived."

X. REBECCA

"And she (Rebecca) went to inquire of the Lord." (Gen. 25:22.)

Evidently she thought there was something wrong in her case, at least there was something mysterious, and she would go to the fountain-head of reliable information—she would inquire of the Lord. Whither she went as to *place*, if indeed there was some place designated as a place of worship, to which she might go; and some *man*, like Melchisedec, to whom Abraham paid tithes, through whom inquiry of the Lord might be made by burdened souls, and answers received, is not disclosed in the context. "Be-

foretime, in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he spake, come and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer." (1 Sam. 9:9.) As Abraham was still living, Rebecca may have gone to him for counsel as to the course she should pursue. Evidently she was wisely guided, for the explanation of what was to her so strange and distressing was promptly vouchsafed, and was complete enough to set her mind at rest; "*Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels, and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.*"

XI. JACOB

The Chronological order requires the insertion here of the following: "Let us arise, and go up to Bethel; and I will make there an altar unto God, *who answered me in the day of my distress*, and was with me in the way which I went." (Gen. 35: 3.)

The day of his distress, to which Jacob refers, was the day when he went forth to escape the fury of Esau, his brother, whom he had

sorely wronged. At the close of the day, he had lighted upon a certain place, where he tarried all night: and he took of the stones of that place and put them for his pillows, and lay down to sleep. But his heart was heavy and sad. All the incidents of the day had served to make it for him *a day of distress;* and it would have been strange indeed, if, considering the religious nature of his past home-life, he had not, in his loneliness and wretchedness, turned to God for support and comfort.

The record is silent as to the words of his prayer, but we may well believe they were full of importunate desire.

What came by way of answer was communicated through a dream, in which he saw, probably, not a real ladder, but, what the Hebrew word signifies, "a towering elevation as of several mountains cast up and heaped together in one, with broken, irregular sides composed of ledges of rocks, serving as steps or stairs by which it might be ascended to the top. In the vision, the angels of God were seen ascending and descending the declivities of this heaped up mountain, while the divine Glory, in visible apparition, rested upon the summit. Such a

vision was well calculated to dispel Jacob's fears and allay the inward tumult of his mind."*

But that was only the prelude to the more important revealings: "And behold the Lord said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with *thee* and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." On awaking out of his sleep, Jacob, profoundly impressed by these disclosures, said, "Surely, the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And he rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it. And

*Prof. George Bush on Gen. 28: 13–15.

he called the name of that place Bethel."

It was to this place, that, at God's command, he was now about to return to *dwell* there, and to make there an altar unto God who appeared unto him when he fled from the face of Esau his brother. And the only consideration that he names, in commending the place for a residence to his immediate household, is the fact that it was there God *answered him in the day of his distress.* There could be no more desirable dwelling-place for him and his family, than what had been to him the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

XII. JACOB

"And Jacob said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. *Deliver me I pray Thee from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau:* for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. And Thou saidst, I will surely do

thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered." (Gen. 32: 9.)

The *person* offering this prayer; the *circumstances* under which it was offered; the *arguments* used in the petition; the *things done* by the petitioner in the way of conciliation, all contribute to render the prayer a memorable one.

The man Jacob had had a remarkable history. It was to some extent a history of wrong-doing, the requital whereof, following swiftly on the heels of the wrong done, involved exile from country, and separation from kindred, with sundry vexations and oppressions in the land where he sojourned. But there was much in the man worthy of warm commendation. Even in the thing we most condemn, there was that which showed a just appreciation of what was of highest value, the attainment of which by dishonorable means was entirely unnecessary and utterly inexcusable. But his willingness to acknowledge his unworthiness went far toward restoring the equilibrium in his character and securing for himself tokens of the divine favor.

The circumstances under which this prayer was offered, were exceedingly trying. While seeking, under the divine guidance, to escape

one set of harassments, he encountered another of a most alarming character. His brother Esau, whose murderous purpose had driven him into exile, was advancing to meet him with four hundred men. He had reason to suspect he was coming to avenge the old wrong. He confesses to his deep anxiety, his fear of Esau, and of a calamity that would involve not only himself, but also the mother and the children. He was practically helpless, for the small company of serving men in his retinue, could offer no effectual resistance to the onsets of the four hundred; and it were vain to seek safety in flight.

There was plainly but the one chance—a divine interposition whereby his brother's heart might be softened, and his wrath appeased, ere he should be near enough to strike the avenging blow. To seek this interposition, Jacob draws near to God in prayer. The arguments he employed are strikingly appropriate and forceful. They are, first, the *direction* given him to return to his country and kindred, accompanied with the assurance, "I will deal well with thee," which was incompatible with a possible disaster *en route*, such as seemed to be impending. Second, the fulfilment, *in part*, of the promise made him at Bethel, some twenty years before, whereof the

"two bands," composed of the mothers and their children, the flocks, herds, and camels, constituting his wealth, were in evidence,—the *partial* fulfilment, binding the promiser to fulfil all that remained, which must needs include a deliverance from the hand of Esau. Third, the *text* of the promise made originally to Abraham and confirmed to Isaac and his descendants, the very words whereof, "And I will surely do *thee* good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea," must cover him in this alarming exigency with the shield of God's protecting power, or else the promise would remain unfulfilled in the spirit thereof as well as in its letter.

Jacob had thus made out a very strong case in his favor; the "*surely*" having all the force of an oath to the covenant of blessing, which must needs embrace a safe conduct for the *whole* journey upon which he had entered in obedience not only to a divine authorization, but to an explicit command.

The things done by the petitioner, evidently at God's suggestion, to propitiate his brother and turn him aside from his supposed vengeful purpose, were most appropriate for one who would prepare the way for a merciful interposition. We cannot overlook either the wisdom or the

largeness of the propitiatory offering. The gift so princely was a fit expression of penitence for the old wrong, which could but have had its effect upon his brother.

The *answer* to the prayer was quite as remarkable as was the prayer itself. It came in two forms: First, apparently while Jacob was still engaged in supplication, there came upon the scene one who wrestled with him hour after hour, even until the break of day, but vanquished him not. The issue of the all-night's struggle was a revelation of the divine personality of his antagonist, an atom of whose shrouded strength had been put forth to disable him as to his ability to *wrestle*, but not as to his ability to *hold on* to his adversary, and to secure from him a blessing, which consisted in a symbolic assurance that he had prevailed with both God and man.

This assurance was the beginning of the answer to his prayer; which, however, was not to be divorced from his own agency in doing what had been suggested to him as the means to the desired end—the doing of what would naturally, and, with God's blessing, did actually appease his brother's wrath.

From Esau's subsequent conduct, one would never have suspected, that he had come to meet

his brother with evil intent. His whole bearing towards Jacob was kind and brotherly.

If he had originally designed to do him harm, he was completely disarmed by the magnificent present and the skilful disposition made at its presentation. "*And he was delivered out of the hand of his brother, out of the hand of Esau.*"

This is the story in its principal features: "And Esau *ran* to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him . . . And he said, what meanest thou by all this drove which I met? And Jacob replied, these are to find grace in the sight of my lord. And Esau said, I have enough my brother; keep that thou hast unto thyself. And Jacob said, nay, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for, therefore, have I seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou was pleased with me. Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because *I* have enough. And he urged him, and he took it.

XIII. ISRAELITES

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt—the king whose favor they

had enjoyed—died; and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they *cried,* and *their cry came up unto God* . . . And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, *and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters;* . . . *I know their sorrows.*" (Ex. 2:23; 3:7.) "And God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob."

And the Lord, speaking to Moses out of the burning bush, said, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites." And as if to dissipate all doubt, he reaffirms: "Behold the cry of the children of Israel is come unto Me, and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them," and know that there is sufficient reason for their cry of distress. "Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people, the children of Israel out of Egypt."

And so began the long series of events, by the

which God wrought out for them a very great deliverance. He had chosen His instrument, a man in the maturity of all his powers, a man familiar from childhood with all the evil environment of his people, who had felt, in his own person, the smart of the injustice which had made their lives miserable. Moreover, he was equally familiar with all the policies and purposes of the reigning family of Egypt, having been an adopted member of that family until he had deliberately made the choice which separated him forever from its friendships, its honors and its emoluments—"Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Moses was no knight-errant seeking adventure. He was indisposed to put himself forward. He even accepted his commission with many grave misgivings as to his ability to fulfil its requirements. "Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" And yet, he was the instrument, wisely chosen of God, which for eighty years had been under training for this splendid mission. From the instant of his discovery by Pharaoh's daughter among the flags of the river side, God's purpose of deliver-

ance for Israel had begun to unfold, but not until now had that purpose come to fruitage. In choosing His instrument, God did not cease to intervene. His plans embraced the whole campaign, and His instrument was only required to follow out strictly those plans as they were disclosed, with more or less distinctness, for a period of forty years. Through all vicissitudes, from Egypt to the confines of the land of promise, God never for one instant lost sight of the deliverance which, oftentimes in spite of themselves, He was working out for His people.

By stroke after stroke, through miracle following miracle, He kept on answering the cry of that people, until He had accomplished all He had originally purposed to do in their behalf, never changing His instrument, and never leaving that instrument without His encouragement and support.

XIV. MOSES

"Moses returned unto the Lord and said, Lord, wherefore hast Thou evil entreated this people? Why is it that Thou sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Thy name he hath done evil to this people; neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all." (Ex. 5:22.)

Quickly came this answer: "Now shalt thou see what I shall do to Pharaoh: for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land. Say unto the children of Israel . . . I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments."

And all this He did by *installments*, than which, in very many instances, there is no safer or more satisfactory way of answering prayer.

XV. MOSES

"And Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh." (Ex. 8:12, 13.) Here begins a series of prayers offered at the earnest solicitation of a wicked man, in his anxiety to escape the succession of judgments visited upon him, his people, and his land, because of his stubborn and persistent refusal to let Israel go from under their hard bondage. Four several times during this succession of judgments, there was an apparent relenting followed by an appeal to Moses and Aaron to entreat the Lord for him. And just as many times Moses made

intercession for him. The story is best told in the record itself.

The second plague, that of the frogs, the first having evidently confirmed Pharoah in his stubborn purpose, was, like all that followed, a visitation so wide-spread and terrible, that a cry of distress went up from all Egypt.

Whereupon, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Entreat the Lord that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.

And Moses cried unto the Lord because of the frogs, which He had brought upon Pharaoh. The answer came without seeming reluctance or delay. "And the Lord did according to the word of Moses: and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields."

XVI. MOSES

Under the fourth plague the *flies* were everywhere. Pharaoh in a spasm of remorse for the miseries of his people, again said, Entreat for me. Moses, though evidently suspicious of the sincerity of the man, nevertheless entreated the Lord for him. (Ex. 8:30.)

And, again, the Lord did according to the word of Moses: and He removed the swarms of flies from Pharoah, from his servants, and from his people, there remained not one. And this He did, though He certainly knew what Moses only suspected, that Pharaoh was dealing deceitfully, with no honest purpose to let His people go.

XVII. MOSES

After a respite, longer or shorter, "the Lord sent thunder and hail; and the fire ran along upon the ground . . . and the hail smote all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast, and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree."

Again Pharaoh, greatly alarmed, sent for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, *I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.* Entreat the Lord, that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail: and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

Notwithstanding a very decided advance in the outward show of penitence is discernible in this confession of Pharaoh, Moses was not deceived thereby, but declared, "I know that ye

will not fear the Lord." Yet he had no heart to refuse to pray for those in such deep distress. "And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread forth his hands unto the Lord." (Ex. 9:33.) In answer, "the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth."

XVIII. MOSES

Once again, when the *locusts* were everywhere covering the face of the earth so that the land was darkened, and when they had devoured every herb of the land, and all the fruits of the trees which the hail had left, and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron *in haste, and he said, I have sinned against the Lord your God and against you.* Now, therefore, forgive I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the Lord your God, that He may take away this death only. "And Moses went out from Pharoah and entreated the Lord." (Ex. 10:16–20.)

The answer came accompanied by a revelation of the process by which the plague would be removed:

"And the Lord turned a mighty strong west wind which took away the locusts and cast them into the Red Sea, *there remained not one locust in all the coast of Egypt.*"

In this series of petitions, there is no record of the arguments, if arguments there were, employed in behalf of the man by whose entreaties he had been moved. Moses doubtless knew that the respite from calamity was only temporary, and would be followed by more frightful relapses and more terrible judgments. He was also assured that the hardening process would go on without interruption until the final catastrophe; and yet, there would remain, for all time, the suggestive record of answered prayer, with the possibility of "a godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation," in a man to whom was given space for repentance, though he was steadily waxing worse and worse.

XIX. MOSES

Moses had encountered his first wilderness trial at Marah, where *the waters were bitter*, and where the people broke forth into loud complainings against him as though he were somehow to blame. And what could he do, save what he promptly did—"*cry unto the Lord.*"

(Ex. 15: 25.) And the Lord, in answer, "showed him a tree, which, when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet"—a thing easily done, and the doing of which might not have involved anything more of a miraculous interposition than was implied in the revealing of a simple remedy.

XX. MOSES

And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, "What shall I do unto this people? They be almost ready to stone me." (Ex. 17: 4.)

What is now the trouble? They had journeyed as far as Rephidim, and *there was no water for the people to drink.* Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, "Give us water that we may drink. . . . And the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us with our children and our cattle with thirst?" But the Lord had provided a remedy for this ill also. And He said unto Moses, go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel, and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river Nile, take in thine hand and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock, in Horeb; and

thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And the Lord opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places, a river; the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. (Ps. 105: 41; 78: 20; Isa. 48, 21.)

XXI. MOSES

"And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people, which Thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For *mischief* did He bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel Thy servants, to whom Thou swearest by Thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven; and all this land that thou hast spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." (Ex. 32: 11–13.)

Something very dreadful was impending. To Moses, who had some forty days previously

ascended Sinai's cloud-enveloped mount, to receive the law at God's mouth, it was said, at, or near the close of the interview: "Thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf and worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

Because of this great sin, the Lord said to Moses: Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: And I will make of thee a great nation.

Without fully comprehending the extent of the wrong-doing which called for so awful a visitation, and without waiting to investigate the same, Moses understood that the case was one of extreme urgency, and he beseeches the Lord in the words recorded above. There was a sequel to these words in a prayer offered after he had learned all the scandalous details of the offense for the which the Lord was ready to consume the people.

The recorded answer to the prayer under consideration, was in the brief statement: "The

Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto His people."

XXII. MOSES

Before giving the sequel to which reference has been made, found in Exodus 32: 31–33, let attention be directed to Moses' own account, recorded in Deut. 9: 18–20, of what transpired in the interim: "And I fell down before the Lord as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned in doing wickedly in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger: for I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure wherewith the Lord was wroth against you to destroy you."

So much of his prayer as is preserved in the record, is in the words: "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot *me* I pray thee out of the book which Thou hast written."

And the Lord said unto Moses, Whoever has sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book. Therefore, now go, lead the people to the place which I have spoken unto thee; behold Mine Angel shall go before thee; nevertheless,

in the day that I visit, I will visit their sin upon them. And the Lord *plagued* the people because they made the calf which Aaron made. He *plagued*, but He did not *consume* as He had first proposed to do. He spared the people as a people. Meanwhile, He keeps His servant Moses in the leadership, with promise of needed assistance—a promise, however, which seemed not wholly satisfactory to Moses. Hence there followed another petition, the third of this series.

XXIII. MOSES

In view of past experiences with a people so fickle in their loyalty to God, and so trying to the patience of the human leadership, Moses was anxious to secure an additional assurance of the divine helpfulness. For this he makes supplication in these words: "See, Thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and Thou hast not let me know *whom* Thou wilt send *with me*." (Ex. 33: 12.) The angel, without name, promised in response to the former petition, *who* is he? And how shall I understand his commission? Will he go *with* me, as well as go *before* me? Evidently, Moses would make sure of God's *own presence* with him as in time past. And the answer he received in the words, "My *pres-*

ence shall go with thee," clearly shows how God interpreted his prayer.

XXIV. MOSES

Still, in this promise, Moses was not sure he had secured all he desired; and, as if the pledge of His *presence* might imply something less than what some unforeseen exigency in his future leadership might require, he adds yet another petition: "Wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? Is it not in that *Thou*—not Thine angel, however powerful and well disposed he may be, nor Thy *presence* merely—*goest with us?*" "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken," *I will go with thee.* (Ex. 33: 17.)

XXV. MOSES

But is Moses now satisfied? Seemingly not. Encouraged by his previous successes, he is emboldened to ask a greater boon, the mere asking of which strikes us as almost, if not quite a presumption. Still he may have thought the granting of the extraordinary favor he was about to ask would greatly enhance his usefulness and reenforce his authority with his people in some

future emergency: "*And he said, I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory.*" (Ex. 33: 18.)

That he with whom the Lord had spoken face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, he, who, on descending from Mount Sinai, was required to put a veil on his face, to cover from view its exceeding brightness, should ask for more of the same, greatly surprises us. And yet, the asking evidently gave no offense.

It was, however, necessary that an explanation should be made as to the limitations imposed by man's frailty.

Hence, the answer to his prayer is a foreshowing of what may *safely* be done, and what that which is done will *consist in*, viz., a revealing of what constitutes the essential glory of God. The answer was apparently designed to correct any erroneous notions Moses might have had, as to what he would see when that glory was revealed.

The verbal answer, so far as we are able to comprehend it, expresses in guarded, yet graphic terms, just *what* God can consistently do, and *how* He proposes to do it, so putting into the hand of His servant the key whereby he may interpret aright the wonderful panorama that would be made to pass before him. "And God

said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." And He said furthermore, "Thou canst not see My *face* (which indeed Moses does not seem to have asked in so many words) for no man shall see Me and live. And the Lord said, behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by: and I will take away My hand and thou shalt see My *back parts*," by which we may understand a diminished or veiled view of His glory, such as he could safely see; "but My *face*," or a full, intensely dazzling view, that would prove fatal, "shall not be seen."

Subsequently, when Moses had once more ascended Mount Sinai, "the Lord descended in a cloud, and stood with him there—in no visible form, we may believe—and proclaimed the name of the Lord," which proclamation was in these words: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in good-

ness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty: visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third, and unto the fourth generation."

Meanwhile, there was a seeming to Moses as of some glorious personage passing by, hidden from view, and yet sensibly near, and proclaiming in an audible voice the distinguishing attributes of the Godhead, or what His *name* represents. And this was the fulfilment to Moses *in deed*, of what had been promised him.

XXVI. MOSES

Moses, deeply moved, made haste, and bowed his head, and worshiped, and that worship took on the form of petition. In him the habit of prayer had become so ingrained, that he must needs express himself in the language of a suppliant. The fact that he had found grace in the sight of the Lord, gave him increased boldness in his supplications; and this is his prayer, the fifth and last in what might be termed the Sinaitic series: "If now I have found grace

in Thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray Thee, go among *us*, for it is a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin." (Ex. 34: 9, 10.)

To this prayer came the answer, "Behold *I make a covenant:* before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art, shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do *with thee*," using Israel as His instrument in driving out the nations that should resist and make war upon them—the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Jebusite. For the full answer to this prayer in its *realty*, it will be necessary to trace the history of the Israelites through all their wilderness experiences and subsequently, until they had come into full possession of the promised land. A terrible thing it was, indeed, that God did in His discomfiture of these enemies.

And, in due time, it became plain enough to all those peoples, that the Lord was in process of fulfilling His solemn engagements with Israel, doing marvels the like of which had not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation. It was

the work of the Lord that they saw and recognized as such.

XXVII. MOSES

"And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, *the fire was quenched.*" (Num. 11:1–3.) This fire the Lord's anger had kindled because "the people *complained.*" The victims of the fire were largely those "in the uttermost parts of the camp," probably the ringleaders in the revolt against the divine order.

XXVIII. MOSES

"And Moses said unto the Lord, wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this poople upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them that Thou shouldst say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this

people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if Thou deal with me thus, kill me I pray Thee out of hand, if I have found favor in Thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness." (Num. 11:11–23.)

The case with Moses at this juncture was a hard one. If the people had been kind and considerate, reasonable in their demands and disposed to make the best of everything, the burdens of the situation would, nevertheless, have been exceedingly heavy—heavier than a man of the average ability could have sustained.

But when the people were full of unreasonableness and impatience, and put the blame of every mischance upon him; when the camp was full of revolt against his authority, no wonder that the burden of the people became oppressive. Just now matters have reached a crisis in their demand for a change of diet—a change from manna to flesh—a most unreasonable demand under the circumstances, and one that could be met only by miracle superadded to miracle.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, gather unto Me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may

stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone."

Nothing could have been more satisfactory to Moses than this proposed division of labor and responsibility with the seventy picked men, known to himself and to the congregation, men holding already some official position, especially when assured that God would imbue them with the same spirit that he himself had—a spirit of burden-bearing and of burden-sharing. As the answer to prayer, it was precisely the measure of relief his necessities required.

XXIX. MOSES

"And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee." (Num. 12:13.)

A strange thing had happened. Trouble had arisen from an unexpected quarter. It was a family affair in which Aaron and Miriam were compromised. The ostensible cause of the trouble, its pretext, was the marriage of Moses to an Ethiopian or Cushite woman; a marriage

that had been solemnized some forty years previously between himself and Zippora, daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian, a God-fearing and very capable man, who had come, bringing the aforesaid wife and two sons, born to Moses in Midian, and had met a very cordial reception on his arrival in camp.

Subsequently, he had given Moses some excellent advice, which had been followed with the most happy results. But, apparently, the consideration shown this man, had excited the jealousy of Aaron and Miriam. They began to speak against Moses in unfriendly criticism not to say open censure, laying special stress upon the impropriety of marrying this foreign woman, a matter that involved no wrong to them, and was really none of their business. But, as has been hinted, this was, probably, only a pretext to cover something in them far more reprehensible. At least, it had led them into a very grievous sin, which God, on His part, could not overlook. "They spake and said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath He not also spoken by us?" Whether Moses was aware of this seditious talk, we are not told; but God knew, and was terribly incensed.

"And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses and

unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out, ye three, unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And He said, Hear now My words: If there be a prophet among you, I, the Lord, will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: *wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?* And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed. And the cloud departed from the tabernacle; and behold Miriam *leprous—as snow.*"

"And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not this sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned. Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed, when he cometh out of his mother's womb. And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee."

"And the Lord said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in

again. And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days."

Doubtless, the lesson was not lost upon her as it might have been had the healing been immediate. For all concerned, it was better that she should not have escaped the seven days of sore discipline. The healing came for which Moses had cried unto the Lord, but it came in the Lord's time—came as soon as the circumstances justified.

May be the Lord, on other occasions, answers the prayer of His servants for healing, with a due regard to the ends of discipline in those whose diseases are traceable to their own follies and wickednesses. A period of personal humiliation and suffering may be good for the soul—a moral sanitation for which provision is made by Him who healeth all our diseases, whether of body or soul.

XXX. MOSES

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land, for they have heard that Thou Lord art among this people; that Thou Lord art seen face to face; and that Thy cloud standeth over them; and that Thou goest before

them by day time in a pillar of cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night. Now if Thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying, Because the Lord *was not able* to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them, therefore He hath slain them in the wilderness. And now, I beseech Thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as Thou hast spoken, saying, The Lord is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. Pardon I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy mercy, *and as Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt until now.*" (Num. 14: 14–19.)

The congregation of Israel had heard the report of the spies—the majority report, the *evil* report: whereat they were greatly discouraged. All night long they had made the camp resound with their weeping and murmuring against Moses and Aaron, saying very many foolish and wicked things, as discouraged and disappointed people are apt to do. Proceeding to yet greater unreasonableness, they are on the point of ston-

ing the two men, Caleb and Joshua, who had remonstrated with them for their faint-heartedness, and had encouraged them to go in at once and possess the good land, assuring them that they were well able to do so, and that, if God delighted in them, He would give them the land.

In the midst of this turbulent scene, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of congregation before all the children of Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? And how long will it be ere they believe me for all the signs which I have showed them? *I will smite them with the pestilence, and will disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.*"

Such was the occasion of the prayer under consideration; a very extraordinary prayer surely, if we consider it only in its *argumentative* feature.

And the Lord said, "*I have pardoned according to thy word;* but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

In the main, the prayer received a favorable answer; that is to say, He would not smite the people with pestilence and disinherit them as He first proposed to do, but He would visit His

displeasure upon "those men who had seen His glory and His miracles which He did in Egypt and in the wilderness"—men who, He declares, had tempted Him now these ten times and had not hearkened to His voice. Surely they should not see the land which He had sworn unto their fathers, neither should any of them that provoked Him see it.

XXXI. MOSES

"And Moses said unto the Lord, Respect not Thou their offering, I have not taken one ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them. And they—Moses and Aaron—fell upon their faces, and said, O God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, shall one man sin, and wilt Thou be wroth with all the congregation?" (Num. 16: 15–22.)

The occasion of this prayer is found in the matter of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who had gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron, and had said unto them: "Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?" Moses, when he heard this, fell upon his face, as he was wont to do in times of

trouble, and spread the matter before the Lord, who gave directions as to what should be done: "Separate yourselves from among this congregation, *that I may consume them in a moment.*" But this was more than Moses and Aaron had expected, and more than seemed to them *just;* and so both men join in a *quasi* remonstrance that secured a *discriminating* judgment by which all save the guilty conspirators and their households were preserved alive. There seemed to be two branches of the conspiracy, and both were overtaken by the swift strokes of a terrible retribution. "The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up all the houses, and all the goods, and all the men that appertained unto Korah; down they went alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation," while there came a fire from the Lord, which consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense. This fire would have extended in the camp, devouring many more, but for the prompt measures instituted by Moses, in making an atonement for the people, sending Aaron quickly, with his censer, into the midst of the congregation where he "stood between the dead and the living until the plague was stayed."

XXXII. MOSES

Therefore the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee, pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us." The people had again broken out into revolt, speaking against God and against Moses, saying, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread"—the manna from heaven, the angel's food, a wholesome diet upon which they had thriven wonderfully, the supply of which had been ever fresh and abundant.

No wonder the Lord was displeased, and sent fiery serpents among the people, and that much people of Israel died. They might have anticipated some wrathful visitation in view of so aggravated an offense; and it had come in a form that filled them with extreme terror.

Therefore the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against thee; pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us."

"And Moses prayed for the people." (Num. 21:7.)

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live."

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived."

Special interest gathers about this prayer and its answer, in view of the use Christ made of them in the way of illustrating the plan of salvation: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." (John 3: 14.)

XXXIII. MOSES

"And Moses brought their cause before the Lord." (Num. 27: 5.) A man of Israel had died, leaving five daughters, but no sons. The daughters had appeared before Moses, and before Eleazer the priest, asking for a possession among the brethren of their father, who, seemingly, had laid claim to all his possessions at his decease.

The case was new, and special guidance from above, was needed and sought. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of

Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter."

Evidently, the Lord, in this instance, taught publicly a woman's rights doctrine as to inheritance; and His answer given on this occasion has ever since been in force among all the nations that have from that time recognized His authority.

XXXIV. MOSES

"And Moses spake unto the Lord, saying, Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, which may go out before them, and which may lead them out and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd." (Num. 27: 15–17.)

At this time, no doubt, Moses began to realize that the period allotted to his own leadership was drawing toward its close; and he was naturally anxious, not only to have his successor designated, but to have him under training for the

responsible position. In this, so weighty a matter, although he may have had his eye on the man whom he would prefer above all others for the place, yet he felt the need of a divine revealing, that would relieve him of all responsibility.

And the Lord, willing to assume that responsibility, said unto Moses: "Take thee Joshua, the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazer the priest and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient. And he shall stand before Eleazer the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall go in, both he and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation."

This settlement of the succession in the leadership must have been a very great relief to Moses, even as it was a most striking answer to prayer. Moreover, it may be regarded as a valuable precedent for all who are about to lay aside the responsibility of leadership.

XXXV. MOSES

We now come to one of Moses' prayers which elicited a remarkable answer; and the answer was not "Yea." The personal favor asked could not consistently be granted, and for a reason that was clearly stated. And yet, as much as could be bestowed in the line of his petition was not denied. "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness, and Thy mighty hand: . . . *I pray thee let me go over and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly land and Lebanon.*" (Deut. 3: 23–27.)

This was in Moses a most natural yearning, and, considering the fact that God himself had certified to his faithfulness in all things pertaining to his house, the reason for refusing to indulge him in this matter must have been, and really was, a most extraordinary one. The explanation given in Moses' own words is as follows: "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, *and would not hear me:* and the Lord said unto me, let it suffice; *speak no more unto Me of this matter.* Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward,

and northward, and southward, and eastward, *and behold with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan.*"

It is well for all men to understand, that prayer is just as truly answered, and just as wisely answered, when God says "Nay," as when He says, "Yea." And the answer may be as *kind* to us, as much for our highest well-being in the one case as in the other. It is not germane to the purpose of this volume to go into an exhaustive consideration of the precise nature of Moses' offense; but it is supposed to be found in his impatient and unbeseeming speech when at Kadesh: (Num. 20:10, 11.) "Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" "And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." See also Psalm, 106: 32, 33. "They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes: because they provoked his spirit, so that *he spake unadvisedly with his lips.*"

Could Moses have thought God had relented, and would go back on His word? If so, the sharp reminder, 'speak no more unto Me of

this matter' must have opened his eyes to the impropriety of which he had been guilty in seeking to change the divine purpose for his personal gratification.

XXXVI. MOSES

"And the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him" for his part in the matter of the golden calf, wherein he had first been guilty of a weak compliance with a popular demand, and then, in order to screen himself from deserved censure had sought to cast off the responsibility therefor upon the people. "And I prayed for Aaron also the same time." (Deut. 9: 20.)

This fact had not hitherto been made a part of the record, whether of purpose we know not. But it is surely a most significant fact that Aaron's guilt was not overlooked of God, and would have been suitably punished but for his brother's intercession. We are more than glad to have this missing link in the original record supplied. We had wondered why Aaron's connivance, not to say active cooperation in that terrible revolt, had not led to such open arraignment, unsparing condemnation, and condign punishment as the case deserved. His greater light and more

exalted position should have made him, in our way of thinking, a shining mark for God's displeasure. But the wonder ceases when Moses, subsequently says, "The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for him also the same time."

XXXVII. JOSHUA

"And Joshua said, alas! O Lord God, wherefore hast Thou at all brought this people over Jordan to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us? Would to God we had dwelt on the other side Jordan! O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turneth their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: And what wilt Thou do unto Thy great name?" (Joshua 7: 7–9.)

The occasion of this prayer was Israel's first discomfiture. Uninterrupted success in all previous encounters with their enemies, had inspired the hope that no disaster would ever befall them. Save for grievous sin on the part of one man, all would have gone well at Ai. Joshua was unaware of Achan's transgression, and so

Israel's defeat was to him inexplicable. In the midst of his prayer, while upon his face before God, a message came to him, bidding him rise and search out the sin for the which the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. "And the Lord said, get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it among their own stuff. Therefore, the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you. Up, sanctify the people, and say, Sancify yourselves against to-morrow." Then followed specific directions as to how he should proceed in ferreting out the guilty party, who was to be burned with fire, he and all that he had, because he had transgressed the covenant of the Lord, and because he had wrought folly in Israel. Joshua having followed out his instructions to the letter, "the Lord turned from the fierceness of His anger," and the full tide of Israel's prosperity returned.

XXXVIII. JOSHUA

Presumably, Joshua had prayed as he "ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor," for the rescue of the men of Gibeon from the five kings of the Amorites who had gathered together for their destruction because they had made peace with Israel.

"And the Lord said unto Joshua, Fear them not; for I have delivered them into thine hand: there shall not a man of them stand before thee . . . And the Lord discomfited them before Israel and slew them . . . And it came to pass as they fled, the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them, and they died; they were more that died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword." (Joshua 10: 8.)

XXXIX. ISRAELITES

"And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord (Judges 3: 9), the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel, the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother."

XL. ISRAELITES

'And it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites." (Judges 6: 7, 14.)

"The Lord sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage: and I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land; and I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell, . . . And the Lord looked upon Gideon, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: Have not I sent thee? . . . Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man . . . The spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon and he blew a trumpet; and Abiezar was gathered after him."

XLI. GIDEON

"And Gideon said unto God, If Thou wilt save

Israel by my hand, as Thou hast said, behold I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and if it be dry on all the earth beside, then shall I know that Thou wilt save Israel by my hand as Thou hast said." (Judges 6: 36, 37.)

"And it was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water."

XLII. GIDEON

"And Gideon said unto God, Let not Thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once: let me prove, I pray Thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew." (Judges 6: 39, 40.)

"And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew on all the ground."

These petitions are remarkable for the liberty taken by Gideon in suggesting the *mode* in which God should confirm His word; and the condescension shown on God's part in making his answer to conform exactly to the mode suggested in the petition.

As these are not the only instances of the kind found in the record, it is fair to infer, that the taking of such a liberty is not necessarily an offense to God; rather, it may be that the mode specified, is a matter of His own suggestion to the suppliant.

XLIII. MANOAH

"Then Manoah entreated the Lord, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." (Judges 13: 8.)

God was preparing beforehand an instrument for the deliverance of His people from the oppression of the Philistines. An unborn child was to be that instrument. But, in order that he might be a fit instrument, it was necessary that the mother, wife of Manoah, should receive strict instructions, not as to what they should do unto the child that should be born, but what the mother should do previous to his birth. An angel was commissioned to announce the birth of the child, and to give these instructions. But the woman, who was not only startled, but considerably confused by what she heard, on reporting the matter to her husband, threw him

also into a state of perplexity. Hence Manoah's petition, "Let the man of God which thou didst send come again and teach us what we shall do. And God hearkened unto the voice of Manoah, and the angel of God came again, and appeared first to the woman, to whom he repeated his instructions, and then, allowing himself to be interviewed by Manoah, he said to him: "Of all I said unto the woman let her beware. She may not eat of anything that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing, all that I commanded her let her observe."

XLIV. SAMSON

This child of Manoah and his wife, now grown to man's estate, has developed into a physical giant, and proceeds very early to put his great strength to the uses for which it was given him, as Israel's champion and knight-errant.

"And the spirit of the Lord began to move him at times in the camp of Dan, between Zora and Eshtaol."

The first victim of his prowess was a lion, encountered in the way, whom he rent as he would

have rent a kid. Ere long, he found the "occasion against the Philistines," which he had been seeking. One encounter is succeeded by another and still another, until, with the "new jawbone of an ass he had slain, heaps upon heaps, a thousand men." The tremendous outlay of strength was naturally followed by an intense thirst. And he "called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of Thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" (Judges 15: 18.)

But God clave an hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again and he revived.

XLV. SAMSON

An uninterrupted series of successes, had, apparently, weakened the moral principle in this man to such an extent that he became a subject of the enemies' wiles. The secret of his strength, long concealed, he had at last revealed to the woman by whom he was beguiled and betrayed.

The immediate results were the loss of his

seven locks, the loss of his eyes, and the loss of his liberty.

As his hair began to grow again, the lords of the Philistines assembled in great numbers to offer sacrifice to Dagon their god, to whom they gave credit for delivering Samson into their hands.

The feature of the occasion was to be the *sport* they would derive from tantalizing this presumably harmless captive, who had been brought in and placed between the two pillars whereupon the house stood.

Three thousand men and women gazed down from the roof in gleeful expectancy of the enjoyment they would derive out of the torture he would endure. Reaching out his two hands Samson grasped the two pillars aforesaid, after calling upon the Lord in these words: "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." (Judges 16: 28).

Then, exclaiming, "Let me die with the Philistines," he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein: So the

dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

XLVI. ISRAELITES

"And the children of Israel . . . went up to the house of God, and asked counsel of God, and said, which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?" (Judges 20:18.)

"And the Lord said Judah shall go up first."

XLVII. ISRAELITES

"And the children of Israel inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin, my brother or shall I cease?" (Judges 20:27, 28.)

The children of Israel on two preceeding days had gone out against Benjamin, and had been defeated with the loss of twenty-two thousand men on the first day, and eighteen thousand men on the second day.

So, it is not to be wondered at, that all the people went up and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings before Him.

And the Lord in response to the prayer they offered on that day of sorrow and humiliation, said, "Go up; for to-morrow I will deliver them into your hand."

"And the Lord smote Benjamin before Israel: and the children of Israel destroyed of the Benjamites that day, twenty and five thousand and an hundred men: all these drew the sword."

XLVIII. HANNAH

'And she (Hannah) was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if Thou will indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but will give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head." (1 Samuel 1:10, 17, 19, 20, 27, 28.) "Then Eli—the Lord's mouth-piece—answered and said. Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition which thou hast asked of Him . . . And the Lord remembered her. And she bare a son, and called his name Samuel . . . For this child I prayed, and *the Lord hath given me*

my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore, also, I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

And he (the child Samuel) worshipped the Lord there, having, doubtless, taken the elementary lessons in that worship, under the tutelage of his mother at home.

XLIX. SAMUEL

"And Samuel prayed unto the Lord" (1 Samuel 8: 6, 7, 9.) When Samuel was old, the elders of Israel came to him and said, "Give us a king to judge us like all the nations." The people had grown restive under the present regime, and demanded a change.

Samuel, though much displeased at the unreasonable demand, nevertheless seems to have deferred his reply until he had asked counsel of the Lord, who, no doubt to his great surprise, said, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me that I should not reign over them. . . . Now also hearken unto their voice: howbeit, yet protest unto them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."

L. SAMUEL

"And Samuel heard all the words of the people and rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord." (1 Samuel 8:21, 22.)

Notwithstanding the people were now fully informed as to the *manner* of the king—the arbitrary and oppressive things he would do—their hearts were so set on having one, that they were quite willing to take all the risks involved. And so, despite God's message of protestation by Samuel, they said, "*Nay but we will have a king over us;* that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go before us, and fight our battles." These were the words Samuel rehearsed in the ears of the Lord, and awaited a reply. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king."

This was not the only instance where an overpowering desire on the part of God's people to be *like others*, had led them to despise the counsel which was for their good. Over and over again they have said, *We will have;* and God has allowed them to have the coveted thing, and to reap the bitter consequences of their own wilfulness through years of humiliation and

suffering, for which there has been no relief.

LI. SAMUEL

"I will call upon the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain. So Samuel called upon the Lord." (1 Samuel 12:17.)

Israel had got their king; but with him they were to get a signal rebuke for demanding one, when the Lord Himself was their king.

To impress the lesson of the hour, and to put them in fear of future miseries should they rebel against the commandment of the Lord under the new regime, Samuel asks of the Lord a sign whereby the people might be made to realize that their wickedness in His sight, in demanding a change of administration, was great.

In response to Samuel's call, "the Lord sent thunder and rain," whereat the people were not only deeply impressed, but thoroughly alarmed. "And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil to ask us a king."

Samuel's reply had a soothing effect upon the terror-stricken people, who were now in a mood to listen: "Fear not: ye have done all this

wickedness—done past recall—yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve Him under the new regime, with all your heart; and turn ye not aside: . . . For the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the right way: only fear the Lord and serve Him with all your heart. . . . But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king."

LII. DAVID

"Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, shall I go and smite the Philistines?" who at this time were fighting against Keilah, and robbing the threshing floors. (1 Samuel 23:2.) "And the Lord said unto David, Go and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah."

LIII. DAVID

"And David inquired of the Lord yet again," apparently to reassure his men, who had said, "Behold we are afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the

armies of the Philistines?" (1 Samuel 23: 4, 5.)

"And the Lord answered him and said, Arise, go down to Keilah; For I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines; and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah."

LIV. DAVID

"Then said David, O Lord God of Israel, Thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up unto his hand? Will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O Lord God of Israel, I beseech Thee tell Thy servant." (1 Samuel 23: 10–12.)

"And the Lord said, he will come down."

Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? And the Lord said, They will deliver thee up.

David would not imperil his cause, the safety of his men, or his own safety, through a failure to inquire of the Lord, and learn of a certainty what the real situation was. He was dealing with a wily and unscrupulous foe, and would

run no risks. And the Lord was quite willing that he should not; especially as he had ventured forth from his hiding-place in the wilderness on an errand of mercy.

LV. DAVID

"And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go after this troop? Shall I overtake them?" (1 Samuel 30: 8.)

The Amalekites were now the aggressors. After burning the city of Ziklag, they led away into captivity the wives and children of David and his men. Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no power to weep . . . And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God. And though his first impulse may have been to go in swift pursuit of the captors; yet he knew that he and his men would be fleeter of foot, fuller of courage, and in every way better equipped for the hazardous undertaking, if they had first taken counsel of God, and had received from Him direct assurances that they would not run in vain.

"And the Lord answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." . . .

"And David smote them from the twilight even unto the evening of the next day; and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men which rode upon camels, and fled. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away; and rescued his two wives. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters, neither spoil nor anything they had taken: David recovered all."

LVI. DAVID

"David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the Lord said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And He said, Unto Hebron." (2 Samuel 2:1.)

Saul and Jonathan are dead—slain in battle—and David is no longer hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. The way is open for his return to his own people, but he has been so long an exile that he seems at a loss to know whether the fulness of time has come for his return.

Besides, he cannot immediately cast off the responsibilities of leadership: he must still care for the men that were with him, and for their households. Moreover, every place might not welcome the advent of several hundred men like those who had resorted to his standard, and had shared his desperate fortunes. Hence, in taking so important a step, he asks and receives counsel of God. And the Lord said unto him, "*Go up —unto Hebron.*" And the manner of his reception in the cities of Hebron clearly showed that no mistake had been made. The conditions were such, that, ere long, apparently of their own accord, though, of course, God was so inclining them, "the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah."

LVII. DAVID

"And David inquired of the Lord, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? Wilt Thou deliver them into mine hand?" (2 Samuel 5: 19, 23.) His advancement to the place and functions of royalty had not changed his habit of seeking counsel of God at critical periods in his history.

The Philistines, hearing that David had been anointed King of Israel, came up to seek him

and offer battle. Nothing loath, we may believe, was he to meet the enemies of Israel. As he saw them spreading themselves in the valley of Rephaim, the martial spirit was aroused within him. But he would do nothing rashly—nothing without first inquiring of the Lord. For there was no false pride in him to deter from publicly recognizing his dependence on God for wisdom to guide, and for help to achieve.

"And the Lord said unto David, Go up; for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand." And David smote them, and said, "The Lord hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me as a breach of waters."

LVIII. DAVID

"And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, He said, Thou shalt not go up, i. e., in face of the foe for a front attack, a change of tactics being now desirable; but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry trees; by a flank movement be ready to assault in the rear: and let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry

trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself: for then shall the Lord go out before thee to smite the host of the Philistines." (2 Samuel 5: 22–25.)

"And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer."

Surely this was a very remarkable answer to prayer—a case wherein God did exceeding abundantly above all David asked or thought. For, He not only planned the campaign, and ordered the fight, but went on before—going in the tops of the mulberry trees with an unseen but resistless host bearing the brunt of the conflict—leaving David and his men only the responsibility of following in the wake of a victory already won.

LIX. DAVID

David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the earth." (2 Samuel 12:16.)

To this beseeching, there came no verbal response. For a very suficient reason, God could not spare the life of the child which was the fruit of David's sin. Nor could such a sin be condoned by any amount of agonized

supplication, accompanied by fasting and lying all night upon the ground.

But, all the same, there was an answer to David's prayer, just such an answer as he might have anticipated after the delivery of Nathan's message. Yet he continued to pray, hoping against hope, until the answer came, clear, distinct, emphatic, when his servants reported to him that the child was dead. And he said, "While the child was yet alive I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live." Until all was over he could not fully comprehend the full significance of the words: "Howbeit, because of this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee, *shall surely die.*" It was a case where mercy knew the appointed bound, and turned to judgment there.

LX. DAVID

"David inquired of the Lord," to learn the reason why a famine had for three years prevailed. (2 Samuel 21:1.) "And the Lord answered, It is for Saul and his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

LXI. DAVID

"And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that which I have done: and now I beseech Thee. O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." (2 Samuel 24: 10.)

But David's contrition came too late to fend off all the evil, as he soon learned from this message by the prophet Gad: "Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee: Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."

Except as he was permitted a choice between three evils, this prayer of David did not turn away the deep displeasure of God, and so might be reckoned as a prayer to which, supposing he was seeking to escape altogether from the

consequences of his sin, the answer was, "Nay." The reasons for such answer are not fully disclosed, and we do not comprehend, at once, the heinousness of the offense of which he had been guilty in numbering the people. We see no impropriety in taking the census under ordinary conditions. But there was, in David's *insistance* on a measure so strongly disapproved by Joab, a something that suggests not only obstinacy, but an inordinate desire to secure some selfish end—possibly his own glorification. It certainly was a something that God saw clearly, and deeply reprobated in a man who sustained such intimate relations to Himself, and who owed all his marvelous successes in life to His fostering care. If he had grown vainglorious, and was seeking to magnify his own importance, or to overawe his enemies by a census that would show a formidable number of fighting men, then did he much need the smiting that reduced the ranks of these men by seventy thousand. And there probably would have been a much larger reduction had not the humbled and penitent king besought the Lord in behalf of those who were suffering for his wrong-doing. "Lo, *I* have sinned, and *I* have done wickedly: but these sheep, what have they done? Let

Thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." It may have been this frame of mind in David that caused God to say to the angel that destroyed the people "It is enough; stay now thine hand."

LXII. SOLOMON

"Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge the people, that I may discern between good and evil: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:9.) A fuller and for our purpose a better, form of this remarkable prayer is recorded in 2 Chron. 1:8–12 where, also, we find the occasion of its being offerred. Solomon had succeeded David his father on the throne of all Israel, and was oppressed with a deep sense of responsibility that prompted him to an extraordinary religious service, the leading feature of which was the offering of a thousand burnt offerings upon the brazen altar which was at the tabernacle of the congregation. "In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead. Now, O Lord God, let Thy promise unto David my

father be established; for Thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this Thy people which is so great."

In answer, the record in 1 Kings, says by way of comment, "And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing"—a comment that might be as fittingly made of any man elevated to the place of supreme ruler in any age or nation, who should ask of the Lord the same thing that Solomon asked.

"And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honor, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge My people, over whom I have made thee king: wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall any after thee have the like."

It is needless to tell those familiar with the record of Solomon's reign how distinguished he became for wisdom and knowledge not only,

but for all the other things God had added, according to His word of promise. Of his contemporaries, doubtless the testimony of the queen of Sheba expressed accurately the concurrent testimony, not only of the peoples, but of all the reigning sovereigns of the then known world: "It was a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts and of thy wisdom: Howbeit, I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes have seen it: and behold, the one-half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: for thou exceedest the fame that I heard. Happy are thy men and happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee and hear thy wisdom. Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on His throne, to be king for the Lord thy God; because thy God loved Israel, to establish them forever, therefore made He thee king over them to do judgment and justice." (2 Chron. 9:58.)

LXIII. SOLOMON

The prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple at Jerusalem is probably, in many respects, the most wonderful prayer on record. It is wonderful for its comprehensiveness, em-

bracing as it does every conceivable exigency that would be likely to arise in the history of a great people, with an extraordinary mission, the fulfilment of which was to extend throughout all the centuries to the end of time—a mission in which all other peoples were to have an abiding interest.

Though the prayer is of extraordinary length, yet it was not too long for so august an occasion; and, seeing it is found in nearly all its details recorded twice in the inspired volume, its curtailment, to any considerable extent, could hardly be justified. The gist of the prayer could not be expressed in a brief compendium.

The temple is finished from foundation stone to turret: all preparations have been made for the imposing ceremonies of dedication: vast multitudes are assembled: the ark of the Lord, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle are in place: the cloud fills the house of the Lord so that the priests cannot stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord fills the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8: 22–53; 2 Chron. 6: 12–42.)

Solomon rehearses in the hearing of the great assembly the circumstances attending the building of the temple, giving due honor to David

his father, in whose heart it was to build an house for the name of the Lord God of Israel—a purpose approved of God, who said to David, "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart." And Solomon *stood* before the altar of the Lord, then *kneeled* down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven: And he said, "Lord God of Israel there is no God like Thee in heaven above or in earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with Thy servants that walk before Thee with all their heart; who hast kept with Thy servant David my father that Thou promisedest him: Thou spakest also with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thine hand as it is this day. Therefore, now, Lord God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David my father that Thou promisedest him, saying, There shall not fail a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel: *so that thy children take heed to their way, as thou hast walked before Me.* And now, O God of Israel, let Thy word, I pray Thee be verified, which Thou spakest to Thy servant David my father.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I

have builded? Yet have Thou respect unto the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which Thy servant prayeth before Thee to-day: that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place which Thou hast said, My name shall be there; that Thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which Thy servant shall make toward this place. And hearken Thou to the supplication of Thy servant, and of Thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place; and when Thou hearest, forgive.

(a) If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before Thine altar in this house: then hear Thou in heaven, and do, and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous to give him according to his righteousness.

(b) When Thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, and shall turn again to Thee, and confess Thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto Thee in this house: then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy peo-

ple Israel, and bring them again unto the land which Thou gavest unto their fathers.

(c) When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess Thy name, and turn from their sin, when Thou dost afflict them; then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy servants, and of Thy people Israel, that Thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon Thy land which Thou hast given to Thy people for an inheritance.

(d) If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; what prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all Thy people Israel, *which shall know every man the plague of his own heart*, and spread forth his hands toward this house: then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways whose heart Thou knowest . . . that they may fear Thee all the days that they live in the land which Thou gavest unto our fathers.

(e) Moreover, concerning a stranger that is

not of Thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country, for Thy name's sake . . . when he shall come and pray toward this house: hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to Thee for; that all people of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house which I have builded is called by Thy name.

(f) If Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever Thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord toward the city which Thou hast chosen and toward the house that I have built for Thy name; then hear Thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

(g) If they sin against Thee . . . and thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, far or near; if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplications unto Thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely, and have committed wickedness; and return unto Thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies . . . and pray unto Thee toward their

land which Thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name: then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and forgive Thy people that have sinned against Thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against Thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captives, that they may have compassion on them: for they be Thy people, and Thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest forth out of Egypt from the midst of the furnace of iron: that Thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of Thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto Thee. For, Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be Thine inheritance, as Thou spakest by the hand of Moses Thy servant, when Thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord our God."

This prayer, with its several specifications, was to receive a remarkable answer. The answer was in the language of sign, of word, and of a long succession of deeds—a succession that continued from generation to generation, and from century to century.

The sign, which betokened a gracious answer, came on the instant Solomon had made an end of praying. Arising from a kneeling posture he stood and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice. The sign was on this wise: "When Solomon had made an end of praying, *the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices.* And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house."

The answer in word, as put down in the record, is, seemingly in two parts, corresponding to the two general divisions of the prayer. "The Lord appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, *I have heard thy prayer*, and have chosen this place to Myself for an house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people; if My people which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land. Now Mine eyes shall be open, and Mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. For now

have I chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever: and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually." (2 Chron. 7:12–16.)

The second part of the answer, corresponding with the first general division of the prayer, was in the words: "As for *thee*, if thou wilt walk before Me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe My statutes and My judgments; then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel. But if thou turn away and forsake My statutes and My commandments, which I have set before thee, and shall go and serve other gods and worship them; then will I pluck them up by the roots out of My land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name, will I cast out of My sight, and will make it to be a proverb and a byword among all nations. And this house which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus unto this land, and unto this house? And it shall be answered, Because they forsook the

Lord God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods and worshipped them: therefore, hath He brought all this evil upon them."

The answer which God hath been "*fulfilling with His hand*," is found written all along on the successive pages of Israel's history, and is, in all its details, an exact fulfilment of what Solomon heard on that memorable night. In ten thousand incidents of that history the prayer of dedication has been answered. God has been, through all the centuries, fulfilling with His hand all His engagements with Solomon. Not one has failed of all He promised to do on certain expressed conditions. But, alas, the conditions have remained all along unfulfilled, and so disaster has followed disaster. Not only has the throne of Israel been empty, but the temple built by Solomon, and the city of Jerusalem itself, have been cast out of God's sight, and have been a proverb and a byword to every one that passed by; while the nation, the chosen people of God, has been plucked up by the roots out of the land.

LXIV. NAMELESS PROPHET

Jeroboam, King of Israel, who had erected at

Bethel a strange altar, and had instituted a sac-religious worship, was visited by a man of God out of Judah, with a message that greatly angered him.

Suiting his own action to the words, "Lay hold on him," the king put forth his hand from the altar, where he was burning incense. "against the prophet," as if he would himself make the arrest, or, possibly, from a passionate impulse to do him bodily harm. Instantly the hand he had put forth dried up, so that he could not pull it in again. The altar also, at the same instant, was rent and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the Lord.

This sudden and awful visitation extorted from the king a cry of anguish. And he said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God, and pray for me that my hand may be restored to me again. "And the man of God besought the Lord. And the king's hand was restored to him again, and became as it was before." (1 Kings 13:4–6.)

LXV. ELIJAH

"And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O

Lord my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and said, O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's soul come into him again." (1 Kings 17:20, 21.)

This widow was she whom God had appointed to sustain Elijah during the famine of three years under the reign of Ahab, King of Israel.

Her supplies had dwindled to a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, when Elijah appeared upon the scene and invoked her hospitality, under a solemn engagement from the Lord God of Israel that the barrel of meal should not waste neither should the cruse of oil fail, until the day He should send rain upon the earth. Meanwhile the son of the woman fell sick; and his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him. The woman, in her distress, reproached Elijah for her calamity: "Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"

Hence the prayer, "Let this child's life come into him again," accompanied with such manipulations as Elijah might have thought, would, with God's blessing, prove serviceable.

"And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and

the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived." And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him to his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth! And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the the Lord in thy mouth is truth. Doubtless, Elijah had, in time past, admonished the woman for some wrong-doing, and she may have been under conviction therefor at the time her child died. When she received him alive from the dead, her words indicated that the seed sown in her heart had come to fruitage, and she thought better of the man who had brought her sin to remembrance.

LXVI. ELIJAH

"Elijah came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . hear me; that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." (1 Kings 18:36, 42.)

It was during the famine for which Elijah had prayed—an infliction that came upon Israel because of the extreme wickedness of the reign of Ahab, and the lapse into abominable idola-

tries of many of the people—that Elijah, after hiding himself from Ahab, who was seeking his life, received this message from the Lord, "Go, shew thyself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth." And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And Elijah answered, *I* have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and *thou* hast followed Baalim. Now, therefore, send, and gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. And the people answered him not a word. They were evidently afraid to commit themselves. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves,

and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under, and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them, and said; Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or, peradventure, he sleepeth and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, and there was neither voice, nor any that regarded

And Elijah said unto all the people, come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down.

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to

the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob; and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord: and he made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: and they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench with water. And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah came near, and said, "Lord God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me: that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again."

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and, having found their tongues, they said, The Lord He is the God;

the Lord He is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

And all this was in answer to prayer, an answer as striking, as all-embracing, as convincing of its efficacy, as anything recorded in the world's history.

LXVII. ELIJAH

But there was a sequel to this prayer. The sound of abundance of rain was heard by none save Elijah. There were no visible signs by which his word to Ahab might be confirmed. The heavens were still as brass over their heads, and none could say how long they would remain so. Meanwhile Ahab ate and drank. But for Elijah there was, as yet, no relief from the mental strain he had endured so long; for, what if the rain came not? In that case all the gain and the glory that had come to God's name, would be but as the morning cloud and the early dew.

Leaving Ahab to his feasting, and the people

to their rejoicings, he went up to the top of Carmel, out of sight and sound of all save his one servant. *Casting himself down upon the earth, he put his face between his knees* (1 Kings 18:42.) And wherefore? undoubtedly that he might give himself to importunate prayer until he should receive some sure token that the sound of abundance of rain had materialized.

And he who had prayed earnestly that it *might not* rain, was now praying as earnestly that it *might* rain. But the token is not given immediately.

Once, and again, and again, even until the seventh time, his servant looked in vain toward the sea for that token. At last he said, "Behold a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

Ah, that is it, the looked for, and longed for token. Instantly he is on his feet, girding himself for a race, lest the rain should overtake him ere he had reached a shelter.

"And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." "The heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." (James 5:18.)

LXVIII. ELIJAH

"And he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kings 19:4.) And this from the prophet Elijah! What had happened to bring him, so soon after the glorious achievement on Carmel, into so desperate a frame of mind? Jezebel, the patroness of the slain prophets of Baal, had sent him a messenger instructed to say, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of those prophets by to-morrow about this time;" and he had been fleeing for his life, going a day's journey into the wilderness before pausing to rest. He was now sitting weary and faint from the exhausting effort and a lack of nourishment under a juniper tree. Giving way to his pent-up feelings, he uttered this extraordinary prayer. He was the last man we should expect to be praying after this manner.

But the Lord took in the whole situation, and knew just what to do with His servant in this emergency. It was plain enough that he was suffering a reaction from physical over-doing, and from the excessive mental strain he had

been enduring for many days. Making no immediate response to his reckless prayer, the Lord gave slumber to his eyes, preparatory to other treatment.

"And as he lay and slept under the juniper tree, behold an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid down again.

"And the angel of the Lord came a second time, and touched him and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God. And he came thither into a cave and lodged there."

During his long journey there is no evidence that he had relapsed into a despondent mood. He had apparently recovered from the reaction from which he was suffering under the juniper tree, and was in condition to give God a hearing.

"And behold the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" In response he did not say, I came here to die; but he opened his heart

freely, disclosing the real occasion of his misery. And he said I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword: and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life to take it away." And He said, go forth; stand upon the mount before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold there came a voice unto him and said the second time, What doest thou here, Elijah? And the second time he repeated his own grievance.

And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha,

the son of Shaphat . . . shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay; and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay. Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him." And so, step by step, the prayer of the disconsolate soul under the juniper tree is answered in God's own time and way: first, by ministering to the wants of the physical man; second, by disclosing things concerning Himself and His manner of executing His plans for the deliverence of His people; third, by removing misapprehension as to the number and quality of those who had remained loyal to his cause; fourth, by giving him something to do, a most valuable prescription for one whose previous career had been full of useful activities; fifth, by revealing the instruments through whom He will destroy His enemies; sixth, by designating his successor in the prophetic office, which was an intimation that he was soon to be released from the burdens and perils of that office. A possible hint was also given, that he would be eased of its responsibilities without suffering the pains of dissolu-

tion, a hint that evidently grew more distinct before his translation.

But some one will perhaps say, this was not *dying*, and it was death he asked for. True, indeed. But was God bound to answer a prayer according to the asking, offered by His servant while in an abnormal condition of body and mind? Surely, that which God substituted for an untimely death was a more satisfactory answer to his prayer—more, infinitely more, satisfactory to Elijah, inasmuch as it more fully and wisely met the want of his soul.

It may be, that, in case other of His servants have, from similar causes, fallen into a disconsolate frame of mind, and imagine they would rather die than live, God may have something better to bestow upon them also; which will quite reconcile them to the prospect of living on for years in this world, while the prospect of gaining an abundant entrance into that other and better world, will be ever growing brighter.

LXIX. ELISHA

"He went in and shut the door . . . and prayed unto the Lord." (2 Kings 4: 33.)

The only son of the Shunammite woman, the hospitable entertainer of the prophet Elisha, lay

dead in the chamber on the wall, built and furnished expressly for the prophet's use. The mother, when, at noon, the child had died upon her knees, deposited his body in this chamber for safe keeping, while she drove post haste for the prophet. When Elisha was come into the house, he went directly to this chamber, and having shut the door prayed unto the Lord, at whose suggestion, we must believe, he did what Elijah before him had done under similar circumstances. He went up and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child. And the flesh of the child waxed warm, a favorable symptom, which showed that God had begun to answer prayer, and was blessing the means. Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro. For what purpose he did this we are not told; but, possibly, to compose his own mind, or to obtain a little relief from the mental stress through which he was passing. And he went up, and again stretched himself upon the child: and the child sneezed seven times, and opened his eyes. The prophet evidently did not think himself at liberty to discard the use of means, however inadequate

they may have seemed to him: for, the simpler they might be in themselves, the more evident and impressive would be the divine interposition.

Then Elisha called Gehazi, his servant, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son and went out.

LXX. ELISHA

"And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, I pray thee open his eyes that he may see." (2 Kings 6: 17.)

In warring against Israel, the king of Syria found his purposes thwarted again and again, through the revealings of Elisha to the king of Israel. At that time the prophet was at Dothan, not far from Samaria, the capital city. Hence, the purpose to capture Elisha; and to that end a formidable expedition was sent. And they came by night and compassed the city. When the servant of Elisha was risen early and gone forth, behold an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said

unto him, Alas, my master! How shall we do? And he, nothing surprised or perturbed, answered, Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed and said, Lord, open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of *fire*, round about Elisha."

LXXI. ELISHA

And when the Syrians came down to him, "Elisha prayed again unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray Thee, with blindness." (2 Kings 6: 17.) "And He smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha." Now they who thought to make him their captive are led into captivity. The tables are turned upon them in a most adroit manner. For, he said unto them, as they were groping their way in the sudden darkness, this is not the way, neither is this the city for which you are bound. Follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria where, indeed, they found the man whom they sought, and something besides which they did not seek.

LXXII. ELISHA

"And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria," Israel's stronghold and the headquarters of their army—"that Elisha said, Lord open their eyes that they may see." (2 Kings 6: 20.)

"And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold they were in the midst of Samaria"; and before them stood the man they had been seeking, and around, on all sides, were the serried ranks of their enemies. As they realized that there was no possible escape out of the trap into which they had been led, and as they heard the king of Israel say, "My father, shall I smite? shall I smite?" they must have looked for instant death. Great then was their astonishment when they heard the prophet's reply; "Wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master."

Such magnanimity proved overpowering. Wherefore, the record adds, significantly, "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

In this case, surely, the prayer test had met a

signal success, the crowning feature of which was an overcoming of evil with good.

LXXIII. JEHOAHAZ

"And Jehoahaz besought the Lord." (2 Kings 13: 4.) And for what? The anger of the Lord had been kindled against Israel, and He had delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Benhadad, the son of Hazael, all their days. At last, Jehoahaz, son and successor of Jehu, humbled himself under the mighty hand of a chastening God; and, although he himself had been the foremost in transgression, yet, mindful of what God had been to, and had done for, His people, when, in time past, they had become steeped in guilt, he betook himself to prayer, and besought the Lord for deliverance from the cruel exactions of the foreign foe.

And the Lord hearkened unto him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them. "And the Lord gave Israel a savior and they went out from under the hand of the Syrians." "And the children of Israel dwelt in their tents as aforetime. And the Lord was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, because of his covenant with

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast He them out from His presence *as yet.*"

LXXIV. HEZEKIAH

"And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel . . . bow down thine ear and hear, open Thine eyes and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God . . . O Lord our God, I beseech Thee save us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only." (2 Kings 19: 15.)

Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard. This is the word the Lord hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee. Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? And against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high? Even against the Holy One of Israel. By thy messengers thou hast reproached the Lord, and

hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel. . . . But I know thy abode, and thy going out and thy coming in, and thy rage against Me. Because thy rage against Me, and thy tumult is come up into Mine ears, therefore, I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest . . . Therefore, thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came. by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For *I* will defend this city to save it for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake." "And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses."

"For the angel of death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;

And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and forever were still."

Never was there a more terrible tragedy enacted. Nothing was omitted from any scene. Just as the curtain is about to fall, the end of the bold blasphemer fittingly closes the drama. "So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, departed, and went and returned, and dwelt in Nineveh. And it came to pass as he was worshipping in the house of Nisrock his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword."

LXXV. HEZEKIAH

"Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the Lord, saying, I beseech Thee O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore." (2 Kings 20: 2; Isa. 38: 2.)

Hezekiah, whose reign had been eminently creditable thus far, is sick unto death. Isaiah had just come from his sick-room, after delivering this message from the Lord: "Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live." Until now Hezekiah had probably en-

tertained strong hope of recovery, and hence the shock produced by Isaiah's message was very great. It was not so strange that he turned his face to the wall, and prayed and wept sore. Almost any man, even the man whose life has been most exemplary, would be likely to do the same: he would do so, though he might have an assurance that it would be gain for him to die.

Hezekiah had no doubt formed plans—plans of usefulness we may presume, that would fail of accomplishment, if he should die just then. Besides, he was enjoying a large measure of worldly prosperity, that would be interrupted by death. He was unprepared for the death-message; but there was no help for him save in prayer to Him who had authorized its delivery.

"And it came to pass, afore Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the Lord came to him saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah, the captain of my people, thus saith the Lord, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the Lord. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will

defend this city for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake."

And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took it, and laid it upon the boil, and he recovered. In promising to heal, God did not dispense with the *means* of healing. The remedy was simple, yet not necessarily an effectual remedy for all, or for any, who may be similarly diseased.

The incident is a suggestive one for all who look to God for the healing of disease. Let them see to it, that the lump of figs, or whatever that may stand for in the materia medica, be not wanting. The remedy suggested may be new to the medical practitioner. It may even be a remedy not approved in the books; and yet, with God's blessing, it may bring quick relief to the sufferer.

LXXVI. ISAIAH

But Hezekiah's faith just at this juncture was unusually weak, and so he wanted a sign for its confirmation. Isaiah suggested, "Shall the shadow go forward ten degrees or go back ten degrees? And Hezekiah said, Let the shadow go backward ten degrees. And Isaiah cried unto the Lord; and he brought the shadow

ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the dial of Ahaz." (2 King 20: 11.)

The incident shows how possible it is, that God, when no principle is at stake, should grant even the *unreasonable* requests of His people. "He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust." (Ps. 103: 14.)

LXXVII. JOSIAH

"Go ye, inquire of the Lord for me." (2 Kings 22: 13; 2 Chron. 33: 21.) King Josiah had appointed a committee of five, consisting of Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahia to make this inquiry. The committee waited upon Huldah, the prophetess, who was at that period the medium of divine communications. And they conferred with her, and she said unto them, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I will bring evil upon this place and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of *the book* which the king of Judah hath read." This book Hilkiah had found while the repairs of the temple were going forward. Its contents, when read by the youthful king, caused him the deepest distress and anxiety. It was clear, that the wrath of the Lord was kindled against Israel because their

fathers had not hearkened unto the words of this book to do according to all that was written therein.

Thus far, the word of the Lord, through Huldah, was confirmatory of the impression made upon the king's mind, and that impression was deepened as she proceeded to state the reason why the wrath of the Lord was kindled against His people: "Because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger through all the works of their hands."

But there was a saving clause in Huldah's deliverance: "But to the king of Judah, which sent to inquire of the Lord, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, as touching the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and the inhabitants thereof . . . and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; *I also have heard thee saith the Lord.* Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered unto thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place."

LXXVIII. JABEZ

As one would hardly search a heap of common soil by the wayside in the hope of discovering a priceless pearl, so the ordinary reader of the Scriptures would hardly expect to find in the chapters of Hebrew genealogy of the Chronicles, and amid the long lists of family names, one of the most striking instances of answered prayer. Nay, he would be likely to skip these chapters, thinking, surely, these lists of names of men whose dust has been mingled for centuries with common earth, could contain nothing of value for me.

But the unexpected certainly happens now and here. "And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, *and enlarge my coast*, and that Thine hand might be with me, and that Thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me." (1 Chron. 4: 10.)

This, surely, was the prayer of an "expansionist," who thought no peril was involved in the enlarging of his coast, especially if God's hand were with him, and He would keep him from the evil. The prayer was a revelation of the simplicity of the petitioner who conceals

nothing from the God of Israel, but tells Him *just* what he wishes. To us the prayer seems to embrace nothing in any way hurtful to the man himself or detrimental to the well-being of others.

"And God granted him that which he requested"; *all* he requested, just as though he had asked nothing unreasonable, and nothing that any other man (any small farmer for example, who wanted an addition to his farm) might not, in similar circumstances, request without offense.

A prayer in these terms would not be out of place in any liturgy. It is worthy of being printed with the answer appended in letters of gold, and suspended in a framework of silver in every man's bedchamber.

LXXIX. REUBEN, ET AL

Another surprise awaits us as we read a little further on in what we might be disposed to characterize as the "dry as dust" chronicles. It is Reuben now, and the Gadites, and half of the tribe of Manasseh, who are at war with the Hagarites. "And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: *for*

they cried to God in the battle, and He was entreated of them; because they put their trust in Him." (1 Chron. 5: 20.) And they led captive their cattle; of camels fifty thousand, of sheep two hundred fifty thousand, of asses two thousand; and of men one hundred thousand. Besides, *there fell down many slain, because the war was of God.*

LXXX. MEN OF JUDAH

"And they cried unto the Lord, and the priests sounded with the trumpets. Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass," in answer to the prayer they had just offered, "that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. And the children of Israel fled before Judah; and God delivered them into their hand. And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.*

Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah

*Possibly 50,000, and not 500,000. Hebrew letters alike in shape being used as numerals were often mistaken for each other by transcribers.

prevailed, *because they relied upon the Lord God of their fathers.* . . . Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the Lord struck him, and he died." (2 Chron. 13:14.)

The bitterness engendered between the two rival kingdoms of Judah and Israel had finally resulted in an appeal to the abitrament of arms, with the result as indicated above, in which God evidently espoused the side of Judah, and gave them a marvelous victory in vindication of their cause, and in answer to their prayer.

LXXXI. ASA

"And Asa cried unto the Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many or with them that have no power: help *us* O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord, Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee." (2 Chron. 14:11.)

There had come out against Asa's army, Zera the Ethiopian, with an host estimated at a million men, and three hundred chariots. The vast numerical preponderence, saying nothing of the chariots of the Ethiopians, awakened in Asa's bosom the most serious apprehensions as to the

result of the impending conflict; and so he appeals to God for help, declaring, *we rest on Thee.*

What answer he may have received through some authorized channel, we are not told. But the details of the glorious victory showed what it must have been as to substance.

"So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; *for they were destroyed before the Lord and before His host;* and they—Asa and his people—carried away much spoil. And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; *for the fear of the Lord came upon them:* and they spoiled all the cities; for there was exceeding much spoil in them. They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem." Was there ever a victory in which the hand of the Lord was more signally revealed?

LXXXII. JEHOSHAPHAT

"But Jehoshaphat cried out." (2 Chron. 18:31.)

"And the Lord helped him; and God moved them to depart from him. For it came to pass when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him."

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, a good man, of whom it was said at an earlier period that "the Lord was with him, because he walked in the *first* ways of his father David and sought not unto Baalim," had not only committed a monumental blunder, but had grievously sinned in going down to visit Ahab, King of Israel, allowing himself to be feted of him, and joining with him against the advice of a prophet of the Lord, in an ill-starred enterprise. Jehu the seer, who went out to meet him on his return, said to him, Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from the Lord?

Nevertheless, when, in the extremity of his peril, he cried out, God came to the rescue. The incident clearly shows that God hears the cry of a good man notwithstanding his troubles may be the result of his own misconduct.

Deliverance, however, from the present trouble is not to be understood as a condonement of past wickedness, or an insurance against the

bitterness and sorrow that are sure to follow in the wake of transgression.

LXXXIII. JEHOSHAPHAT

"And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said, O Lord God of our fathers, art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in Thine hand is there not power and might, so that none is able to withstand Thee? Art not Thou our God, who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before Thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham Thy friend forever . . . saying, if when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in Thy presence cry unto Thee in our affliction, then Thou wilt hear and help?

And now, behold, the children of Ammon, and Moab, and Mount Seir, whom Thou wouldest not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and destroyed them not; behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of Thy possession, which Thou hast given us to inherit. O, our God, wilt *Thou* not judge them? *for we*

have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

This powerful appeal, supported by the presence of all Judah, who stood before the Lord with their wives and their children, could not fail to secure a favorable answer.

Then upon Jahaziel came the spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; and he said, hearken ye all Judah, ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat. Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; *for the battle is not yours but God's.* To-morrow go ye down against them . . . Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: Fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them; for the Lord will be with you."

And they rose up early in the morning and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa . . . And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, utterly to slay and to destroy them; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up

against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, supposing them to be enemies, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, mistaking each other for the common enemy, every one helped to destroy another. These were the "ambushments" the Lord had set, by which the confederate forces became their own destroyers.

And when Judah came toward the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked upon the multitude, and behold, the vast army they had so much dreaded, were dead bodies fallen to the earth, with not a single survivor in sight.

When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance, both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were three days in gathering the spoil, it was so much. No wonder that henceforth "*The fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they had heard that the Lord fought against the enemies of Israel.*"

LXXXIV. HEZEKIAH

After the great religious revival early in the

reign of Hezekiah, there had been certain violations of the letter of the law in the observance of the feast of the passover. Many of the people had not cleansed themselves before partaking. But Hezekiah prayed for them saying, The good Lord pardon every one that *prepareth his heart to seek God*, the God of his fathers, according to the purification of the sanctuary." (2 Chron. 30: 18, 20.)

Some bodily ailment had come upon them so soon as they had transgressed the law—a transgression that was the result of misapprehension or ignorance. "And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah and healed the people."

LXXXV. MANASSEH

"And when he (Manasseh) was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." (2 Chron. 33: 12.)

Manasseh, who, at twelve years of age, succeeded his father Hezekiah, soon showed himself an adept at all forms of wickedness. He also "made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do *worse than the heathen*, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the Lord spake to Ma-

nasseh and to his people: but they would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. There he seems to have come to a realization of his wickedness and shame. And so it is written, "When he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him." "And the Lord was entreated of him, and heard his supplications, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.

"And he took away the strange gods, and the idol he had placed there, out of the house of the Lord, and all the altars he had built in the mount of the house of the Lord, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city. And he repaired the altar of the Lord, and sacrificed thereon peaceofferings and thankofferings, and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel."

A most wonderful conversion! as wonderful for its transforming power as any of the surprising conversions of modern times. The

beginning of the change wrought in him was evidenced by a phenomenon like that which marked the transformation in Saul of Tarsus—"Behold he prayeth." And after the praying, came the legitimate fruits of conversion, in the breaking off of sins by righteousness—the taking away of the strange gods, and the rehabilitation of the worship of the true God, which he had aforetime done his utmost, first to degrade and discourage, and then to destroy.

LXXXVI. NEHEMIAH

From Hanani, one of his brethren, and others, Nehemiah had learned of the sad state of affairs at Jerusalem. They had told him of the great affliction and reproach of those left of the captivity; and of the wall of the city broken down; and of the gates thereof burned with fire.

"And it came to pass when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech Thee, O Lord God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love Him, and observe His commandments; let Thine ear now be attentive, and Thine eyes open, that

Thou mayest hear the prayer of Thy servant, which I pray before Thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel, Thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses.

"Remember, I beseech Thee, the word which Thou commandest Thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: but if ye turn unto Me, and keep My commandments and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set My name there.

"Now these are Thy servants, and Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy great power and by Thy strong hand. O Lord, I beseech Thee, let now Thine ear be attentive to the prayer of Thy servant, and to the prayer of Thy servants who desire to fear Thy name; and prosper, I pray Thee, Thy servant this day, *and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.*" (Neh. 1:11.) Nehemiah had, evidently, a purpose formed, to the ac-

complishment of which, it was necessary he should have the consent and cooperation of King Artaxerxes, whose cupbearer he was. The king, who had noticed the sadness of his countenance, inquired as to the cause, remarking, "This is nothing else but sorrow of heart." The remark gave Nehemiah the opportunity he desired; and he said unto the king: "Why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? And the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So, I prayed to the God of heaven '—an ejaculatory prayer for wisdom to frame his request— "And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favor in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it."

Now, mark, how wonderfully God prospered him in answer to his day and night prayer. Not only did it please the king to send him to Judah; but also, at his request, letters were given him to the governors beyond the river, instructing them to convey him over; and to Asaph, keeper of the king's forest, requiring him to furnish beams for the gates of the palace which apper-

tained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house Nehemiah himself would occupy.

LXXXVII. NEHEMIAH

On his arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah succeeded in enlisting its population, with few exceptions, in his plans for the rebuilding. But almost immediately he encountered opposition from various parties. He mentioned by name certain ones who gave out that they were coming to fight against Jerusalem. "Nevertheless," he adds, "we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night."

Later on, when lying rumors were put in circulation by these same parties, who thought thereby to weaken his hands from the work, that it should not be done, Nehemiah again resorted to prayer, saying, "O God strengthen my hands." And yet again, when they sought to divert him from the work by groundless alarms and threats of bodily harm, he prays, "My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets that would have put me in fear." (Neh. 4:4–9; 6:9–14.)

To all these prayers, the answer came in *the prosperity* God gave them in achieving what they had undertaken, despite the various devices by which their enemies sought their discouragement and defeat. "So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth day of the month Elul, *in fifty and two days.*" And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard thereof and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they were much cast down in their own eyes: *for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.*"

LXXXVIII. ESTHER, ET AL

"Go gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan and fast for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night nor day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king; and if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:16.)

The step Esther was about to take was one involving great risk, and, unless, at her appearance, the king should hold out the golden scepter, it might prove fatal.

Her own life and the life of her people, put in jeopardy by the spite of a man whom the king had heretofore delighted to honor, and who, at

that instant, was supposed to be all-powerful at court, depended upon the successful execution of a series of approaches by which she hoped to secure the desired deliverance.

That she might be endued with the requisite courage and wisdom, that the king might be favorably disposed at the outset and at each successive stage of the perilous undertaking, there was a demand for such fasting and praying as would take hold on God, whose speedy interposition was all that could fend off the doom of extermination, the details of which had been remorselessly planned and were on the eve of execution.

The answer came by installments. "When the king saw Esther the queen, standing in the court, he held out to her the golden scepter," with the gracious words, "What wilt thou queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be given thee to half of the kingdom." Then followed in quick succession the acceptance of the invitation for himself and Haman to the banquet; then the sleepless night for the king, the search of the records, the honoring of Mordecai; then the second banquet, with Esther's request for her own life and the life of her people; then the execution of Haman

upon the gallows, fifty cubits high, which he had so recently erected for Mordecai; then the countermanding of the order for the massacre of the Jews, in all the king's provinces.

LXXXIX. PSALMIST

"I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and *He heard me* out of His holy temple." (Ps. 3:4.)

"O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee . . . and *Thou hast healed me.* (Ps. 30:2, 3.)

"I sought the Lord, and *He heard me,* and delivered me *from all my fears.*" (Ps. 34:4.)

"I called upon the Lord in distress. The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place." (Ps. 118:5.)

These four passages, in which the Psalmist records the burden of some of his prayers, at different periods, and the answers received are, as all familiar with this portion of the Scriptures know, a fair sample of what they contain in the way of petition. Something, indeed, must be allowed for the poetic license which forbids, in many instances, a literal construction. Yet these four testimonies are something more than poesy; they represent real incidents in the life of their author, and vivid experiences of answered

prayer. That God had heard out of His holy temple, that He had healed him of sickness, that He had delivered him out of all his fears, that He had set him in a large place, are matters of record in prose as well as in poetry. A series of indisputable facts underlies the whole service of song as it found expression under the old economy, the same as under the new.

XC. PSALMIST

In Psalm 116:1–, is found an answered prayer, with sundry specifications, in which we recognize something wondrously familiar, as though it might have been a veritable transcript from our own experiences. We cannot doubt that David had passed through similar experiences. The petitions and the answers are here concisely rendered: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." He thought himself to be dying; and his case, doubtless, seemed alike to friends and physicians, to be desperate, if not utterly hopeless. He was suffering excruciating physical pain, and was growing weaker and weaker. It was, indeed, "trouble and sorrow." In his extremity he bethought him of possible help from another quarter: "*Then called I on the*

name of the Lord, O Lord deliver my soul."

Quickly the answer came, "*I was brought low—He helped me.*" He did what the physician could not do. Nay, the physician was despairing of my life, when God interposed. 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, my feet from falling." The deliverance, as the psalmist contemplates it, embraced more than the rescue from death. In his mind, he cannot dissociate deliverance from death from other merciful interpositions.

XCI. PSALMIST

"I waited patiently for the Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." (Ps. 40:1.) David was in a sad spiritual plight, from which it seemed impossible to escape; nay, his efforts to do so only aggravated his condition—he was more wretched, and helpless, and hopeless.

At last, in sheer desperation, he ceases from his struggles and gives over all efforts to extricate himself. A new and blessed experience, contemporaneous with a *patient waiting on the Lord*, begins. "And He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."

XCII. PSALMIST

"In my distress I called upon the Lord and cried unto my God." (Ps. 18:6—.)

The answer is highly figurative, and the poetic license is much in evidence; but, beneath the word-painting, there are a multitude of facts that justify the high coloring. "He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him, even into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth." (Terrific thunder, or an earthquake, or both these, would be the corresponding natural phenomena.) "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it." (Not an unusual effect of lightning when it strikes a combustible material.) "He bowed the heavens also, and came down, and darkness was under His feet." (The settling down of the clouds as in a tempest, creating an intense darkness, portending the approach of a tornado.) "And He rode upon a cherub, and did fly upon

the wings of the wind." (A cyclonic movement of exceeding swiftness and great destructiveness.) "At the brightness that was before Him His thick clouds passed hail-stones and coals of fire." (Like what had been frequently encountered by the enemies of Israel when God undertook for His people). "The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave His voice; hail-stones and coals of fire. Yea, He sent out His arrows and scattered them, and He shot out lightnings and discomfited them. Then the channels of the waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils." (As at the passage of the Red Sea.)

These tremendous and terribly alarming exhibitions of God's power amid the elements of earth, air, and water, have overawed, if they have not overthrown, the enemies of the Lord and His people, rendering it easy for Him to do, what the psalmist avers He had done in his case: "He sent from above, He took me, He drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy and from them which hated me. . . . He brought me forth also into a large place: He delivered me because He

delighted in me." To one who had traced the record of answered prayer in David's history, this seems like a *rèsumè* of the whole, and it probably was designed to be.

XCIII. DANIEL

"Daniel made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah his companions; that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon." (Daniel 2: 17, 18.)

Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten some impressive dreams; and had called the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans for to show him his dreams, which, if they failed to do, they were to be cut in pieces, and their houses were to be made a dung-hill. And fail they did, to the great displeasure of the king, who was "angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon." And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain: and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain, though there is no evidence that they had had a fair chance, if any chance at all, to test their ability to make known unto the king the several dreams he had for-

gotten. Daniel communicated with his companions, apprising them of their mutual peril, and engaging them to desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret.

"Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. . . . Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, . . . and said, destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known unto the king the interpretation. Daniel, after giving God the honor due Him for the disclosure he was about to make, proceeds to recall to the king's mind the forgotten dreams and to interpret the same. When he had finished, the king answered unto Daniel, and said, "Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret." Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Daniel, mindful of the aid they had given him in prayer, requested of the king, and he set

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the highest place of promotion—the king's gate.

XCIV. DANIEL

"And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes: and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments: we have sinned, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from Thy judgments . . . Therefore hath the Lord watched for the evil, and brought it upon us: for the Lord our God is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we have not obeyed His voice . . . O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem Thy holy mountain . . . O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary which is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Thine ear and

hear, open Thine eyes and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: . . . . O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name." (Daniel 9: 4–19.)

This prayer, of which we have transcribed only the larger portion, was offered just as the seventy-year period, determined for the Babylonish captivity was about to close, as Daniel understood from the books of the prophet Jeremiah.

Nowhere, in any prayer of the Scriptures, can we find such an outburst of confession, and such deep contrition and humiliation, accompanied by so full a vindication of all God's dealings with sinful men, or such urgent appeals for forgiveness. Nor yet, can we find elsewhere a prayer in which the suppliant makes the cause of the people for whom he pleads so fully his own. It is not simply "we," but "I and my father's house," who are involved in the transgression, and have need of pardon.

The answer to such a prayer must needs have some striking features, and so the narrative proceeds in these words: "And while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my sup-

plication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And He informed me and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter and consider the vision.

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, *to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.* Know therefore, and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks: the street shalt be built again, and the wall even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the

sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate."

We may not presume to suggest what might have been Daniel's conception as to the answer God would vouchsafe to his prayer. But it is safe to say, that that answer surpassed all his expectations. It went, in its unfoldings, far beyond anything he had asked or thought. Its significance, save in its general features, is not readily comprehended, even by a careful reader who is more or less familiar with the subsequent events of Jewish history. Consequently, a departure from the course hitherto pursued in this compilation, that will admit of a paraphrase, by one more competent to act as interpreter, will doubtless be welcomed:* "Seventy sevens of years, equal to four hundred and ninety years are cut off from the course of future time for Thy people and Thy holy city, at

*Prof. Henry Cowles on Daniel.

the end of which provision shall be made for the full pardon of sin, and for putting it utterly out of My sight, as a thing shut up, sealed and covered; and to bring in a system of everlasting righteousness, whereby pardoned sinners may both be accounted and may become righteous before Me. This, by amply fulfilling, will close up those visions of the prophets which respect the Messiah to come. Then will I anoint My church, the spiritual temple of the new dispensation, with the gracious unction of the Holy Ghost.

Repeating, with more particulars: know, then, and consider, that from the issuing of the decree of Artaxerxes for restoring and rebuilding Jerusalem, unto the public ministry of Messiah, the Prince, shall be forty-nine years and four hundred thirty-four years; *i. e.*, forty-nine up to the point of completing the rebuilding of the city, and four hundred and thirty-four from that point till the Messiah shall appear before the public, to commence His gospel ministry. This city shall be restored and rebuilt; the thing is settled in the counsels of the Almighty, and shall be done, although in times of much distress.

After the four hundred and thirty-four years

shall have expired, the Messiah shall be cut off by a violent death; His relationship to His ancient covenant people will cease; they will reject Him, and He will abandon them to their righteous doom. Then the people of the Roman prince, coming from afar, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; its end shall be with the sweeping flood of ruin; even till the end of this war, there is a divine decree of desolations. During one heptad of years the covenant of God's mercy shall become effective to many: at the middle point of this heptad, He will make sacrifice and offering cease by becoming Himself the one great atoning sacrifice, complete thenceforth and forever, and superseding all the sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual. Then, down upon the summit of the temple, now an abomination before God for the apostasy of those that worship therein, comes the desolator, the Roman legions—even until a complete, terrible, and predetermined destruction shall have been poured forth upon the desolate city."

XCV. DANIEL

"In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did

I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." (Daniel 10: 2, 3, 10–12.)

"And, behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and the palms of my hands: and he said unto me, O Daniel, a man of delights, (*i. e.*, as to God) understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, *thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.*" . . . "I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days . . . . And now will I show thee the truth."

XCVI. JONAH

"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly and said, I cried by reason of my afflictions unto the Lord, *and He heard me;* out of the belly of hell (grave) cried I, and Thou heardest my voice. For Thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and Thy floods compassed me about; all Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me.

Then I said, I am cast out of Thy sight: yet will I look again to Thy holy temple. The waters compassed me about even to the soul, the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottom of the mountains: the earth with her bars was about me forever: yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God. When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thine holy temple. They that observe lying vanities forsake their Benefactor. But I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed." (Jonah 2: 1—.)

Of course the record of this prayer, giving his sensations and mental exercises while imprisoned in the belly of the great fish, was made by Jonah, subsequent to his deliverance. An answer seemed to be vouchsafed him ere that deliverance came; for he had an assurance that his prayer had come unto Him "into His holy temple," but the visible answer is recorded in the brief sentence: "*And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.*"

XCVII. JONAH

"But it"—the sparing of Nineveh, whose inhabitants under the preaching of Jonah had repented—displeased that famous preacher exceedingly, "and he was very angry"—angry because his prophetic word had failed of fulfilment, through the mercy of God, who, when He saw how universal and genuine was Nineveh's reformation, "repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and did it not."

"And he (Jonah) prayed unto the Lord and said, I pray Thee O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest of the evil; therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live." (Jonah 4: 1–3.)

Of course, the Lord could not say, "Yea," to such a prayer; a prayer so entirely out of place, so intemperate in speech, and so full of misconception of what was not only for the glory of God, but also for his own good repute. Besides, to take away his life while he was in such a temper—so

angry for what should have filled his soul with unspeakable gladness—would not have been the proper thing. But the Lord could condescend to have a faithful talk with His disappointed and grieved servant, in which He would be able to show him how unreasonable was his position, and how rash his petition. And such a talk He had; wherein, He, at first, expostulates with him, and then teaches him the lesson he needed much to learn. The incident employed was a recent one, in which the coming up of a gourd for his protection from the sun's rays one day, and its smiting on the day following, leaving him exposed to the intense heat, until he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he, still in an unamiable frame of mind that had not been mollified by his experience with the gourd, said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd for which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that can-

not discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

Jonah's prayer is a fair sample of those offered by not a few who are full of complaints when things have not turned out according to their prophecies, God in mercy having done some better thing.

While this is not the place for a homily on the prayer, yet it might be well for similar complainers to lay to heart the lesson taught Jonah when he was so displeased at the results of God's alarming message to the people of Nineveh. The repentance and not the destruction of men is the end God seeks to secure when He authorizes the delivery of such a message. Before Jonah's day, God had caused it to be written: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, and not that he should return from his ways and live? . . . As I live saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live,

he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live."

The lesson which Jonah learned at the mouth of God, he, no doubt, found was, in place of a "Yea," a far more suitable response to his prayer than would have been the death which seemed to him just then so desirable.

Coming down to the new dispensation, we find the wonder-working power of the old economy revived, and reaching its culmination under the ministry of Jesus Christ, into whose hand the Father had given all things, including the prayer-answering function. (John 3: 35.)

And He had scarcely entered upon His ministry ere He began to exercise that function in the behalf of all sorts of afflicted people who applied to Him for relief.

XCVIII. THE NOBLEMAN

It may be, that the first of the series of answered prayers, in the New Testament Scriptures, is that recorded in John 4: 46–53.

"A certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum, when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son: for he was at the point of death." Jesus, as if to draw him out, and disclose the vigorousness of his faith, said unto him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." This proved a spur to, rather than an extinguisher of faith. And the nobleman saith unto Him, "*Sir, come down ere my child die.*"

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth."

Would the nobleman take Jesus at His word? or, would he insist upon His coming down with him to Capernaum? "And the man *believed the word* that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way," proving thereby that he was indeed a noble man.

"And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: *and himself believed and his whole house.*"

XCIX. THE LEPER

A leper came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." (Matt. 8:2; Mark 1:40–42.) "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth His hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean." "And as soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him and he was cleansed." And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." The priestly inspection, required by law, was to make sure that the disease was exterminated; and his certificate to that effect was a testimony to all men that the danger of contamination no longer existed. At the same time, it would be a sufficient voucher for the genuineness of the miracle wrought upon him. It was plain enough why Jesus, who was always law-abiding, should pursue this course; but why charge the man to say nothing?

We can only surmise His reasons for such a charge, seeing He Himself made no explanation. It is very clear, however, that He seemed never

anxious to have His deeds of beneficence exploited, although He must have forseen that, as a rule, the men whom He had healed would, through the excess of their joy, be quite unable to keep the matter to themselves. However, that blazing abroad of what had happened, gave an opportunity to the skeptically inclined, to investigate each case. They could see for themselves whether the evidences of a real miracle were present, and whether there had been a real, and not merely a seeming answer to prayer. So far as we can learn, there was never an instance, where the fact of healing was disproved, or where there was a speedy return of the disorder, showing that the seeds of the malady were not thoroughly eradicated. In this case, at least, the man upon whom the miracle was wrought, was fully persuaded in his own mind, of the beneficent change wrought in him; and, without waiting for the priestly certification, he "went out and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter." And it is doubtful if Jesus was very much displeased thereat, though it is in evidence that He was somewhat discommoded thereby, inasmuch as He "could no more openly enter into

the city, but was without in desert places."

C. THE CENTURION

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." (Matt. 8: 5–10; Luke 7: 1–10.)

Jesus knew at once what the centurion desired. "And He said unto him, I will come and heal him." The centurion, somewhat overcome by this ready compliance, answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. . . . And Jesus said unto the centurion, go thy way; *and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the self same hour.*" Without laying His hand upon the sick man; without entering the apartment where

he lay; without coming beneath the roof which sheltered him; He spake the word only, and it was done. The faith of the centurion was signally honored.

CI. THE DISCIPLES

"And His disciples came to Him and awoke Him. saying, *Lord save us, we perish.*" (Matt. 8:25—; Mark 4:38.)

Jesus and His disciples had entered into a ship, and had put out to sea. "And behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but Jesus was asleep. His disciples, greatly alarmed, came to Him and awoke Him, saying, Lord save us, we perish." They did not stop to consider how impossible it was for them to perish while Jesus was on board. Just then, they did not think of Him as something more than human, as "Immanuel, God with us," or else they would not have been so terrorized by the tempest. He, seeing clearly how the case stood, saith unto them, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" "Then He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm."

This double miracle, where the wind and the waters obeyed His behest, greatly astonished the disciples. But the wind and the sea recognized the voice of their Master, and felt the spell of the presence and power of Him who spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast. (Ps. 33: 9.)

CII. THE PALSIED

"And they brought to Him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed on which the sick of the palsy lay." (Matt. 9: 2; Mark 2: 3—.)

The prayer offered by, and in the behalf of this sick man, was in the sign language, and expressed not only the urgency of their united desires, but a faith that would surmount all difficulties while pressing its way to the healing fount. Jesus instantly comprehended all this and whatever else there was that made its mute but importunate appeal to His compassion.

"And Jesus, seeing their faith—the faith not only of his friends, but also of the man himself, at whose urgent solicitation, not unlikely, this

application to Him had been made—faith in His power and willingness to heal, He "said unto the sick of the palsy, *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*" Going beyond the healing of the body, His mercy took a far wider range, and conferred an infinitely larger benefit in the forgiveness of sins. Possibly Jesus knew the origin of this man's disease to have been in unlawful indulgences, and that they had been a burden on his soul more oppressive than the physical discomfort from which he was suffering. Overhearing the comments of certain of the Pharisees and scribes, who took exception to His exercise of the pardoning prerogative, He added yet another word as a confirmatory proof that He *had* power on earth to forgive sins. Then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house. And he arose and departed to his house, a healed and happy man. When the multitudes saw it, it was not strange that "they marveled and glorified God."

CIII. JAIRUS

"There came a certain ruler and worshipped Him, saying, My daughter is even now dead," or "lieth at the point of death."

(Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:22, 35—; Luke 8:41.)

And Jesus arose and followed him, and so did His disciples. And when He came into the ruler's house, He suffered no man to enter, save Peter and James and John, and the father and mother of the maiden. Entering in where the damsel, now dead, was laid, He took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And straightway the damsel arose and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment."

CIV. WOMAN WITH BLOOD ISSUE

Classed among the most remarkable of musical compositions by one of the great masters, are his "Songs Without Words." Why may not a similar classification be made of not a few of the prayers without words, which have received remarkable answers?

> "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed;
> The motion of a hidden fire
> That trembles in the breast."

In our way of thinking, very much of the effectual praying done in our world is not put into words.

Take for example that prayer of the woman

with an issue of blood for twelve years; who had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse. When she had heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind and *touched His garment*, thinking, "if I may touch but His garment I shall be made whole." (Matt. 9:20–22; Mark 5:25–34; Luke 8:43–48.) As if hoping thereby to avoid publicity, she had approached Jesus from *behind*. But, meanwhile, her heart throbbing with an unutterable yearning, had revealed her presence and purpose to Him who knew what was in man. "And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of her plague."

"And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself the power which had gone forth from Him, turned Him about in the crowd, and said, Who touched Me? . . . And He looked round about to see her who had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling . . . came and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. *And He said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.*" In every movement of this woman from the first, Christ had sensed, with

infallible certainty, the prayer of an importunate soul.

CV. TWO BLIND MEN

And when Jesus departed from Jarius' house, "two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Son of David, have mercy on us." (Matt. 9:27.)

"And Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord."

"Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. *And their eyes were opened.*"

CVI. SYROPHENICIAN WOMAN

"And behold a woman of Canaan, a Syrophenecian by nation, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came, and fell at His feet; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter." (Matt. 15:22; Mark 7:24.)

Then followed a most remarkable scene, in which, at the first, Jesus seemed to be indifferent to the woman's beseechings. Afterward, as if soliloquizing, He tries her faith sorely by the speech that had in it naught but discourage-

ment; and then, to cap the climax, He remarks, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," using the opprobrious term common among the Jews, who were wont to regard all the Gentile world as inferior to themselves frequently speaking of them as dogs.

This woman, however, as one has well said, from the very word which seemed to make most against her, with the ready wit of faith, drew an argument in her own favor. Truth, Lord, I am indeed one of the dogs, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table, or, the dogs under the table, eat of the children's crumbs. I admit, I have none of the rights of children, and I claim none of them. But the dogs, in their proper place under the table, are entitled to what the children waste—the crumbs. Surely, if I am content to occupy the dogs' humble estate, thou wilt not deny me the poor privilege of that estate—the privilege of the crumbs, which is all I crave. Give me but the dogs' portion, and I will be content.

Well had she endured the tests applied to her faith, and great was her triumph! "And Jesus said unto her, for this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil

gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed."

Matthew's version of the outcome is in these words, "Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

CVII. TWO BLIND MEN

"And behold two blind men, sitting by the wayside, when they heard that Jesus passed by cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them that they should hold their peace. But they cried the more saying, Have mercy on us O Lord, Son of David." (Matt. 20:30.)

The persistence of these men was remarkable; it was the persistence of conquering faith—a faith that would take no denial. Their cry had entered the ear of Him for whom it was intended. "And Jesus stood still. And He called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord that our eyes may be opened." "So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him."

CVIII. "LEGION"

"And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him." (Mark 5:18–20; Luke 8:38, 39.)

This was the man who had had his dwelling among the tombs: whom none could securely bind, even with chains, because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him; and always, night and day, he had been in the mountains and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones.

This man was full of devils; his name, he said, was Legion, for we are many. To him Jesus had said, Come out of the man thou unclean spirit, and had been obeyed.

What had happened was soon told far and wide, in city and country, and the people came to see what was done; and they saw him that was possessed with the devil and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind. Surely, to be attended by a man so changed inwardly and outwardly, would have proved in every place a drawing card. Everybody would

have been coming to see the man out of whom had gone so many devils, and the man who had cast them out by a word.

Moreover, this miracle of grace, though thoroughly transformed, doubtless realized his own weakness and want, and would have had great enjoyment and profit from a daily association with his benefactor, besides being able to serve Him in some things.

Howbeit, Jesus, for a reason He does not disclose, suffered him not. Probably He saw how He could use him more efficiently in some other way, the way indicated by the words, "Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee."

Presumably, the man was glad to know his mission: for he departed, with no seeming reluctance, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

And so it was made very clear, that Jesus in saying "Nay," instead of "Yea," to his petition had done the wiser thing. And this same thing He has done a thousand times since, when the man whose transformation has magnified the grace of God, instead of being assigned to a

place and a service that he would have elected for himself, and in which he might have thought he would find the greatest enjoyment and would be most useful, has been sent forth on a mission to others, to tell them what great things Jesus had done for him—a mission that has not only proved the better thing for himself, but also more for the credit of his Lord.

Many of the first disciples evidently mistook the mind of Christ, when, after Pentecost, they stayed on at Jerusalem, partaking of the ungrudging hospitality of the brethren there, and enjoying the society and fellowship of the apostles, instead of returning quickly to their several homes, and telling their friends and neighbors the glad news. They better understood His mind when they found themselves scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria by a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and were going everywhere preaching the Word, and making converts to the faith.

CIX. A DISCIPLE

"And it came to pass as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as

John taught his disciples." (Luke 11: 1—; Matt. 6: 9–13.)

By precept and example Christ had taught His disciples many things in regard to prayer; but, perhaps because He regarded it a matter of secondary importance, He had not, until now, introduced into His discourse anything in the nature of a prayer *formula.* However, now that an occasion had arisen for some deliverance on the subject, He says, in a few words, all that the case seemed to require. "When ye pray, say, Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation."

That He designed to give His disciples a stereotyped form of prayer, or that they supposed He was doing so, is quite improbable. He was, evidently, willing they should have a large liberty in such a matter; and the fact that this is the only instance in which He made any suggestion as to the form of prayer, is not without significance. Nevertheless, then, as now, very many who are more solicitous as to the forms of things, than as to their substance, have made much use of these words. But there is nothing

to forbid a going beyond the limit set by the formula in making known our requests unto God, provided, always, that there is naught in the spirit of any petition that is out of harmony with it; particularly that portion upon which Christ laid special emphasis when He added, "For if ye *forgive* men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye *forgive not* men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

It is altogether likely that the disciple who preferred this request never once thought the request itself might properly be assigned a place on the list of answered prayers; but we, who are more fully informed as to the position Christ occupies in the heavenly places, have no hesitation in making such an assignment. He to whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, was then, as He is now, Immanuel, *God with us*.

CX. PETER

After the miracle of feeding the five thousand men, besides women and children, Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and to go before Him unto the other side of the lake. After sending the multitudes away, He Himself

went up into a mountain apart to pray. But, meanwhile, the ship, upon which the disciples had embarked, encountered a contrary wind, and was tossed with waves in the midst of the sea. In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. They were at first greatly alarmed, supposing they had seen spirit, but He spake, saying, It is I, be not afraid.

"And Peter answered and said, If it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, *Lord, save me!*" (Matt. 14: 24–31; Luke 6: 45–52.)

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, Wherefore didst thou doubt?"

CXI. PEOPLE OF GENNESARET

"And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew near to the shore. And when they were come out of the ship, straightway the people, recognizing Jesus, ran through that whole region round

about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard He was. And whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch, if it were but the border of His garment." (Matt. 14: 34–36; Mark 6: 56.)

Of course, Jesus would not refuse, and so it came to pass that *as many as touched Him were made whole.*

His answer came silently, without words, in most instances, we may presume, but it was no less effective on that account. Jesus knew, at every touch of faith, that virtue had gone out of Him on its healing mission.

CXII. DEAF MAN

"And they bring unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech Him to put His hand upon him." (Mark 7: 32—.)

And He took him aside from the multitude, as if he wished to escape observation, "and put His fingers into his ears, and He spit, and touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears

were opened, and the string of his tongue was oosed, and he spake plain." To some extent, here was a departure from His usual mode of healing, involving a larger use of what would be called manipulation, but for what reason is not disclosed. It probably was for the man's sake; it certainly was not because His own power to heal was circumscribed by the fact that there was a second trouble. He could have secured the same results as easily, by saying, "Be opened," or "Be loosed."

Perhaps He deemed it desirable that those who sought His aid should not come to depend upon a stereotyped mode of healing, as if there was special virtue in that mode rather than in some other. To Him the mode was immaterial, but it might become an occasion of stumbling to some who applied to Him for help.

CXIII. BLIND MAN

"And they bring a blind man unto Him, and besought Him to touch him." (Mark 8:22–25.)

Very likely this was done by friends of the man at his earnest solicitation.

"And He took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when He had spit on his eyes, and put His hands upon him

He asked him if he saw aught. And he looked up and said, I see men as trees walking. And He put His hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, and saw every man clearly."

Perhaps, it was safer in his case, looking to permanent results, that the restoration of sight should not have been too sudden, a suggestion that oculists in these days appreciate, and govern themselves accordingly. When they would make sure of a successful operation for cataract or other disease of the eye, they wish their patient to become gradually wonted to the light. And who can say that He who formed the eye, did not intend to drop a hint in the minds of those who should in future times treat the diseases of this most delicate organism, that it was best to go slowly, healing by successive stages. It may be, too, and probably was, something in the man himself, that was hindering an instantaneous cure—a lack of faith, perhaps, in the efficacy of Christ's touch, a lack that no longer existed from the moment he saw men as trees walking. He could believe then without wavering; and, consequently, at the second touch of those holy hands, he saw every man clearly.

CXIV. A FATHER

"And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit: and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him; and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away; and I spake to Thy disciples, that they should cast him out and they could not." (Mark 9:17, 22–27; Matt. 17:14; Luke 9:38.) He answereth him and saith, . . . Bring him unto Me. And they brought him unto Him: and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed, foaming. And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? A strange question this for Jesus to ask, but not for an ordinary medical practitioner. Did He mean to suggest aught as to the effect of *age* upon this form of disease?

"And the father said, Of a child: and oft-times it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters to destroy him: *but if Thou canst do any thing have compassion on us, and help us.* Jesus saith unto him, *If thou canst?* All things are possible unto him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child, whose

faith was being subjected to the severest trial, "cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

"When Jesus saw that the people came running together," evidently to gratify their curiosity, "He rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, *I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.* And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him: and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, He is dead. *But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he arose.*"

And we may be sure that from that day he had never a relapse, the foul spirit never daring to disregard the imperative command, *enter no more into him*—a command, that, to the perfection of a cure, is just as much needed in every other case where a foul spirit is to be exorcised.

A prayer, however importunate, that makes provision for a relapse, sooner or later, is not a prayer that is likely to receive a favorable response from Him who says: *Sin no more, lest a a worse thing come upon thee.* It is such a provision in many an *earnest* prayer, that excludes it from the list of *answered* prayers.

CXV. BARTIMEUS

"And as He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great number of people, blind Bartimeus, . . . sat by the wayside begging. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And many charged him that he should hold his peace: but he cried the more a great deal, Son of David, have mercy on me."

"And Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. And they called the blind man saying, be of good comfort, rise; He calleth for thee. And he, casting away his garment," as one who was confident he would have no further use for it, "rose and came to Jesus, who said unto him, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? The blind man said, Lord, that I might receive my sight." (Mark 10: 46–52.)

"And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. *And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.*"

In his case, there could be an *instantaneous* cure, because in his mind there was not the slightest questioning of Christ's ability and will-

ingness to heal, and because of his intense earnestness in seeking the boon he craved, an earnestness that grew more intense as discouragements were encountered.

CXVI. ZACHARIAS

Zacharias and Elizabeth, now well stricken in years, were godly people, but like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca before them, they had been sorely tried in one particular; they were childless. It is in evidence, that they had been much in prayer on this subject, but in what phrase they had made known their request unto God, or with what reasoning had pressed their suit, the Scripture saith not. May be, they thought it strange that their prayer had for so long a period evoked no reply. However, the fulness of time had now come for some authentic disclosure. (Luke 1: 13.)

"And there appeared unto Zacharias, an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, at which he was officiating. And when he saw him he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not Zacharias: *for thy prayer is heard;* and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt

have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

One of the greatest events in the world's history was the birth of this child, this forerunner of the Messiah, this Elijah of the new dispensation. During his brief but eventful career, the way of the Lord was so far prepared, that when he ceased calling men to repentance, Jesus of Nazareth was ready to enter upon His ministry.

As a boon to humanity, as a preparation for the messenger and the message of the Gospel of peace, it was simply glorious, and it must have filled his parent's hearts with joy and gladness, during all the remainder of their earthly pilgrimage.

CXVII. THE LEPER

"Behold a man *full* of leprosy; who, seeing

Jesus, fell on his face and besought Him, saying, *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.*" (Luke 5:12.)

A very bad case this—a man *full* of leprosy—every part of his body reeking with the loathsome disease. Had he heard of the cleansing of other lepers by this same Jesus, that he should beseech Him with words so full of assurance? Very likely, for faith cometh by hearing. He had, at least, heard enough from others, and perhaps had seen enough, though at a safe distance, to encourage this advance.

Apparently without an instant's hesitation, "Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will, be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." That there might be no question as to the genuineness of the cure, He bade him go and show himself to the priest, and offer for his cleansing according as Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.

CXVIII. TEN LEPERS

"As He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: and they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." (Luke 17:13.) Lepers were very much in evidence

during the ministry of Jesus, and their cases always excited His instant compassion.

The appeal now is rendered more urgent by the number joined in making it. When Jesus saw them, He apparently made no effort to reach them. It was enough that their cry for mercy had entered His ear. And He said unto them, as He had said to all others of their class, to whose beseechings He had graciously responded, "Go show yourselves unto the priests," so putting the stamp of His approval upon the Mosaic law of sanitation. Dispensing with all intermediary steps, not even saying, "I will, be thou clean," He bids them show their confidence in Him, and at the same time their respect for the aforesaid law, by conforming to its requirements. "And it came to pass, that as they went they were healed"—healed in the very act of obedience. A broad hint this to whosoever is seeking the divine interposition for the healing of disease, to the effect that, the completeness and permanency of any cure is contingent upon the fulfilling of the conditions of healing in each case prescribed. To Him "who healeth all our diseases," the discovery, of a presumptuous purpose to disregard the law—whose violation, it may be, was the original cause of the

disease—will, most assuredly interpose an insuperable obstacle to the healing process before it is entered upon, or will instantly suspend it after it is begun.

CXIX. JESUS

"And the Lord said, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired you, that he may sift you as wheat, *but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:* and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren." (Luke 22:31, 32.)

This prayer of Jesus for Simon Peter was certainly answered in the respect indicated by the prayer itself, which asked not that Peter should escape *temptation*, or that when tempted he might not *fall*. Just at that time Peter was altogether too self-confident. Jesus saw clearly what the result would be, and gave him fair warning of the lapse that was coming. But the prayer was, that *his faith might not fail*. And that it did not fail is evidenced by the going out and weeping bitterly that followed the sorrowful look he encountered as the cock crew after he had thrice denied his Lord.

How sincere was his repentance and how complete his recovery was subsequently revealed in many ways, and on many occasions. He had

indeed *denied* his Lord, but he did not lose *faith* in Him, as he had lost faith in his own steadfastness. His *love* for Christ had not grown cold afterwards, neither had he become disgusted with His service, though, for a little season, it looked that way. He did not withdraw himself from the company and fellowship of his fellow disciples, though he must have appeared among them with down-cast looks and tear-stained cheeks. He was promptly on hand at the open sepulchre, and at the appointed place of rendezvous in Galilee. It was not Peter who said, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails; and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come," which of the apostles did the Holy Ghost elect and empower to be His mouth-piece? And was there in Peter's discourse on that occasion any evidence of a failing faith? Subsequently, in a great assembly of the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, he, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, "Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, if we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by

what means he is made whole; be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby ye must be saved." Were there in this remarkable address, any indications of a failing, or even a wavering faith? Surely, Christ's prayer for Peter was signally answered; and yet, the full weight of evidence on this point is not in. We submit only the large sample, and that in the form of a brief.

CXX. THE CHRIST

We are now on the border line of what, in respect to answered prayer, may well be regarded as holy ground.

"*O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*" (Matt. 26: 39.) Once, twice, thrice this prayer was offered by Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, on the same

night in which He was betrayed. With slight variations the words of the prayer, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are the same. There is also agreement as to what Christ said before He began to pray, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful *even unto death.*" Luke, however, adds these important particulars: "And being in an agony," subsequent to offering the prayer the first time, "He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground:" "*and there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him.*" Seemingly a clearer view of the sufferings He must undergo during the next few hours brought upon Him such a spasm of agony as to create a fear that He might die prematurely—die before He had come to the cross and so His mission on earth fail of accomplishment in its most important particular. This awful fear caused the "sore amazement," and started the bloody sweat from every pore of His body. The case was critical in the extreme, and what wonder that He should first kneel on the ground, and then, as the agony increased, should fall on His face and pray, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me unless I drink it, Thy will be done." The prayer itself was

conditioned upon the will of His Father; and that will could only allow of a *strengthening* of body and soul, which would enable Him to drink from the bitter cup until He had drained it to its dregs. Wherefore the appearance of an angel from heaven upon the scene. That the foregoing is the true solution of the mystery attending the answer, is fully justified by what is written in Hebrews 5:7. "So also Christ . . . who, in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him who was ABLE TO SAVE HIM FROM DEATH (not surely the death upon the cross), AND WAS HEARD IN THAT HE FEARED," the services of an angel from heaven being the instrument employed for that purpose.

CXXI. THE THIEF

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." (Luke 23:42, 43.)

On either side of Jesus, as He hung upon the cross, was a thief. They were sharing with Him the ignominy and agony of crucifixion. One of these men, evidently a hardened criminal, railed on Jesus, saying, If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us. The other who not un-

likely had heard of Jesus, if he had not on some occasion heard Him, and had come to think He was, indeed, what He professed to be, the Son of God and the Savior of sinners, rebuked his fellow, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.

But, conceding that the self-accusing criminal knew only what had been revealed to him since he was brought to execution, he evidently knew enough to produce conviction as to the character and quality of the man suffering at his side, to whom he turns, after the open espousal of His cause, and says: "*Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.*" (Luke 23: 42, 43.)

If ever there have been in the history of genuine conversions to Christ clearer evidences of a saving change, we know not where they are to be found. Moreover, when we take into account the presumably small amount of light the man had previously enjoyed, these evidences seem more convincing.

But the answer Jesus made is conclusive as to the status of the man when he proffered his

request: "*Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.*"

Much, overmuch perhaps, has been made of this incident in the way of encouragement for those who are nearing the end of a sinful career. But it may be well to ask whether the conditions are the same in all such cases—whether opportunities for the open espousal of Christ's cause have been enjoyed; and, if so, whether they have been improved or neglected?

CXXII. THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST

The closing scenes of the expiatory sacrifice have been reached: the victim is nailed to the cross, at whose foot a procession of His enemies is passing by, reviling Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Thou that destroyest the temple in three days, save Thyself and come down from the cross." Meanwhile the chief priests and elders say, He saved others; Himself He cannot save: if He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him: He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him, for He said I am the Son of God; and the thief which was crucified with Him cast the same in His teeth. The Roman soldiers also mocked Him, coming to

Him and offering Him vinegar, while at the same time they were parting among them His garments and casting lots for His vesture.

Such was the harrowing spectacle upon which the immaculate Son of God, the atoning sacrifice for human guilt, looked down at the instant He offered the prayer: "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" (Luke 23: 34.)

And was this prayer answered? Might these murderers—the thief, the soldier, the elder, the scribe, the chief priest—all these, who with instant and loud voices had joined in the demand for His crucifixion, become the subjects of the Father's forgiveness?

Might they who had shown no mercy to Him who was their best friend, hope for mercy? Is it not to be presumed, with no stretch of fancy, that among the three thousand converted at Pentecost, and the thousands added subsequently to the ranks of the believers—including the great company of priests who were obedient to the faith—there were a very considerable number of those who had cried, Crucify Him, that experienced the forgiveness from His Father for which Jesus prayed? And who among the thousands that were listening to Peter's discourse

on that occasion would have been more likely to be pricked in their hearts with pungent conviction of sin, or more ready to cry out, "Men and brethren what *must* we do?" than the men who knew they were, to a greater or less extent, responsible for the crucifixion of the Son of God? Who would be more willing to comply with the conditions of forgiveness—repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ? But the answer to this prayer has a far wider range than the thousands who were immediately responsible for His death. It embraces all who in every nation, and in all generations, have, by their unbelief and rejection of Christ, become partakers of their guilt. The experience of forgiveness by any one, or by all these, who have repented and have been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, has been in answer to this prayer of the crucified Christ.

CXXIII. THE ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren. (Acts 1: 14.)

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully

come, they were all with one accord in one place,"—an upper room in Jerusalem. "These all" included the eleven apostles and more than one hundred other disciples, who, obedient to the command of their risen and ascended Lord, were waiting for the fulfilment of the promise of the Father.

There is no dispute as to what was the burden of their prayers and supplications, viz., the enduing with power from on high for the witnessing work, whatever that enduing, when received, might prove to be.

They had continued in this waiting attitude for nearly ten days, but the anticipated answer had not yet come.

There had been nothing unusual in their experiences during the protracted prayer service; yet they were in a constant state of expectancy of something out of the ordinary, when "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." And this was what they had been wait-

ing for, the *answer* to their united prayer and supplication. (Acts 2: 1.)

The proofs of power were soon in evidence. The multitude came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed, and marvelled; but their astonishment increased when the sometime cowardly Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and began an address which culminated in the words: "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Tremendous were the effects of this closing sentence in its convicting energy; and they said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, *what must we do?*" to which came the reply, which has been sounding down the centuries, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call."

As the immediate and crowning result of this

first discourse by one endued with power from on high, in answer to the prayers offered in the aforesaid upper room, there were added to the company of disciples, the same day, about three thousand souls. But that was only an earnest of what was to follow,—the beginning of a religious movement that continued to spread and gather force, until very soon thereafter, the number of believing men alone was reckoned at five thousand. Later on, the record reads, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women": and later still, "The Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

CXXIV. THE DISCIPLES

There was to be another scene, resembling that at Pentecost, but on a smaller scale. Peter and John had been arrested and imprisoned. On the following day they were released, after being commanded not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus, to which they responded, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things we

have seen and heard." (Acts 4: 31.) "When they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them because of the people. And being let go, they went to their own company and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them."

Then followed a united prayer service, in which they said: "Lord, Thou art God, which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is. . . . Of a truth against Thy holy child, Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants *that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word*, by stretching forth Thy hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy child, Jesus." (Acts 4: 24–30.)

"And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, *and they spake the Word of God with boldness . . . And with great power gave the apostles wit-*

ness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ: and great grace was upon them all." The answer to prayer in this instance seemed to go much beyond the asking; and, as the context shows, the blessing bestowed took on new and exceedingly gracious forms.

CXXV. STEPHEN

"Lord lay not this sin to their charge." (Acts 7:60.)

And was this prayer of the martyr Stephen the instant before "he fell asleep," crushed beneath the weight of stones rained upon his devoted head by the maddened crowd which gnashed on him with their teeth because of his faithful delivery of God's message, also answered?

At whose feet was it that the witnesses laid down their outer garments, as they stripped themselves for their murderous work? And which one of all those upon whom his gaze rested at that supreme moment would he have been as likely to single out as the embodiment of all the concentrated hate that could be satisfied with nothing short of his death as the young man whose name was Saul—a man, it may be, whose face was familiar to him? Was

he foremost in his thought, as he prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge"?

Later, this young man was ready enough to charge himself with a guilty responsibility for that fearful crime: "And when the blood of Thy witness, Stephen, was shed, I also was standing by and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." (Acts 22:20.)

And did the prayer of Stephen take effect in a case like that? Surely the sin of Stephen's martyrdom was not *so* laid to the charge of this young man as to exclude him from the benefits accruing from the sacrifice on Calvary. At a subsequent period, in his first epistle to Timothy, this same man, no longer young and no longer a persecutor, writes: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; *but I obtained mercy*, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. . . . This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy*, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long

suffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him to life eternal."

Besides this Saul of Tarsus, there may have been others who were consenting unto Stephen's death, including some who, perhaps, cast at him the stones that killed him, who subsequently awoke to a keen sense of their own guilt, and obtained mercy.

CXXVI. SAMARITANS

"The apostles which were at Jerusalem, hearing that Samaria had received the Word of God, sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 8:14–17.)

"Then laid they their hands on them, *and they received the Holy Ghost.*" And so the wall of division between Jews and Samaritans began to disintegrate, and the antagonistic elements were brought into sweet accord.

CXXVII. SAUL OF TARSUS

"And the Lord said unto Ananias, *Behold he prayeth,* and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him

that he might receive his sight." (Acts 9: 1.)

Hence, it became necessary, in order that the vision might be fulfilled, that Ananias should cooperate. "And the Lord said unto him, Arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus." "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way that thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales; and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat he was strengthened. . . . And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogue, that He is the Son of God. . . Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ." As a result, very soon the blood-thirsty persecutor, transformed into a flaming convert, was himself the subject of persecution, and was fleeing for his life.

CXXVIII. CORNELIUS

"Cornelius, a centurion, a devout man, that

feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway, saw in a vision, about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him he was afraid and said, What is it Lord? And he said, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter: he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." (Acts 10: 2, 3.)

We infer, from this communication of the angel, that Cornelius was somewhat in the dark about some things it was desirable he should know—things relating to the Gospel of Christ—and there was not only a yearning, but a praying for illumination and direction.

Meanwhile, Peter, through a vision, was being prepared for his part of the work of enlightenment.

He is sent for by Cornelius, and the two men are presently comparing notes. Afterward Peter opens his mouth and discourses to the assembled company on this wise: "The word which God sent unto the Children of Israel,

preaching peace by Jesus Christ; that word ye know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; how that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed with the devil: for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day and showed openly." And so Peter went on delivering his message until he had come to the words: "To Him gave all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth on Him shall receive remission of sins." Just at this point, "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost; for they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded

them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."

Who is not amazed at the results of prayer in this instance—prayer which seemingly set an open door for the entering of the Gospel message, and for the pouring out of the gift of the Holy Ghost upon the whole Gentile world throughout all generations.

CXXIX. PETER

A most excellent woman, a disciple of Jesus, a resident of Joppa, had sickened and died. Peter, who was not far away, was sent for, and, when he was conducted into the death-chamber, he found all the widows weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas, alias Tabitha, had made while she was with them. Putting them all out, "*Peter kneeled down and prayed* (Acts 9:40), and turning to the body, said, Tabitha, arise."

"And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive. And it was known throughout all Joppa; and many believed in the Lord."

CXXX. THE CHURCH

Herod had killed James the brother of John

with the sword, and because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.

And when he had apprehended him he put him in prison, and set a strong guard over him, intending later to bring him forth to the people. Peter, therefore, was kept in prison, with no seeming chance of escape; for the prison itself was strong, and the usual guard over prisoners had been doubled or quadrupled in his case; and, besides, he was bound with two chains, and was sleeping between two soldiers. But, meanwhile, "*prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.*" (Acts 12: 5–12.)

There is evidence that some all-night praying was being done at the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where *many were gathered together praying;* and the praying was of no ordinary character. It was not only *to* God, but, as the event proved, it had *taken hold on God.*

And this is what happened in answer to the praying done by the church: "Behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and He smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird

thyself, and bind on thy sandals; and so he did. And he went out and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision.

"When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him." And when Peter was come to himself, he said, "Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent His angel, and delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews."

And when he came to the house aforesaid, and had, after some difficulty, gained admission, those gathered there were not a little astonished at the evident answer to their prayers.

"Beckoning unto them with his hand to hold their peace, Peter declared unto them *how the Lord had brought him out of prison.*"

CXXXI. PAUL AND SILAS

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." (Acts 16:25—.)

At the instigation of men whose hope of gain

had been cut off by the casting out of an evil spirit from a certain damsel whom they had used as a socth-sayer, Paul and Silas had been cast into prison, at Philippi. The jailer, under charge to keep them safely, had thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. Despite their painful position, these men were evidently in a joyful frame of mind, that began to manifest itself, at the midnight hour, in prayer and praise to God. Not unlikely, the prayer may have been for the jailer, that his heart might be changed, and his treatment of them be more merciful. And the prisoners heard them; but not the prisoners only; God's ear was open to their cry. "And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bands were loosed." Then followed a scene of intense interest, the outcome of which was the conversion and baptism of the jailer with all that were in his house. Such kindly ministrations as would be suggested to hearts renewed by grace—the washing of the stripes inflicted on the erstwhile prisoners and the setting of meat before them—followed.

Never was there a more signal answer to

prayer; never was it more evident that God did exceeding abundantly above all His servants asked or thought. The prison shaken to its foundation; the doors flung open, and every one's bands loosed; the jailer asking what must I do to be saved; the rejoicing and believing in God with all his house; the coming of the magistrates and the setting at liberty with abundant apologies; surely Paul and Silas were not anticipating all these marvels as they were praying and singing praises to God at the midnight hour.

CXXXII. PAUL

"But after long abstinence, Paul stood forth in the midst of the sailors and soldiers, his ship-board companions, who, with himself, had been caught in a fearful tempest, and were likely to perish, and said, "Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but of the ship."

And how came Paul to know this? He had been down in the hold of the ship fasting, and,

of course, praying to God in behalf of the crew and passengers. At length an answer came, which he made haste to communicate, in substance, to the whole ship's company, in order that they might take heart, and be happy once more. This is his own account of the matter: "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." (Acts 27:21–25.)

Passing over all the details of the rescue, we simply note the final summing up of results: "And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest they should swim out and escape. But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. *And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land,*" every man having diligently used the means God had put in his power to that end.

CXXXIII. PAUL

"And it came to pass that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever, and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid hands on him." (Acts 28:8.) The answer to his prayer, came in the form of power to *heal*, not only this man, but others also which had diseases in the island.

CXXXIV. PAUL

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." (2 Cor. 12:8.)

Lest he should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to Paul "a thorn in the flesh," the nature whereof has been a matter of surmise—nothing in the context shedding any light on the subject. However, the best exegetical authority supposes it to have been "some bodily affliction that was *like* the continual piercing of the flesh with a thorn; and that it was something designed to prevent spiritual pride."

It is not an improbable supposition that it was something that could be seen by others, and might expose to ridicule, thus serving to keep him humble.

Alford suggests, that it was some painful and tedious bodily malady, which at the same time put him to shame before those among whom he exercised his ministry. Of such a kind may have been the disorder in his eyes, more or less indicated in several passages in his history and epistles.

Dr. John Brown, an eminent physician and essayest of Edinburgh, Scotland, in a very ingenious paper, favored the eye disorder theory as the more probable. But whatever the thorn may have been, it was a very sore trial to Paul, who evidently supposed that, in addition to the suffering it caused, it impaired his usefulness.

And so he had prayed repeatedly and earnestly for its removal. At length he received an answer, which was partly "nay," and partly "yea." The Lord could not safely remove the thorn, whose office was to keep His servant in a humble frame of mind, but He could, and would, and did see to it, that he had *grace* to endure the trial, which, for him, was a far better thing. And Paul was evidently disposed ever after to see the matter in that light, and to make the best of the situation. He was not only *submissive* under the trial, but went so far as to *glory* in his infirmity, seeing that it would

bring to him a vast increment of strength, through the power of Christ resting upon him. That power, despite the thorn in his flesh, would insure his success as a minister and apostle of Jesus Christ. Moreover, it would then be the more manifest that "the excellency of the power" was of Christ, and so the glory of all his achievements would be ascribed to Him. A very satisfactory result that must have been —an answer to his repeated request that exceeded all his *anticipations*.

Surveying the whole field of answered prayer as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, we are impressed—

(1) By *the large variety of circumstance*, which furnished the occasion for offering and answering prayer. That variety has been well-nigh all-embracing. Not alone in great affairs, but in matters that might be accounted trivial, we have seen men inquiring of God; and His ear has not been turned away. Hence the inference is legitimate, that there can be *no* circumstance of our earthly life that may not become an appropriate occasion for making known our requests unto God, with the reasonable expectation that an answer will be forthcoming. How much good cheer there is for those who

come to God in prayer in such an inference!

(2) The *great willingness of God to answer prayer* has been revealed. That willingness has seemed the more remarkable in view of the utter unworthiness of those who prayed. Never was there seeming *reluctance* on His part to succor those who invoked His aid, let the occasion of their trouble have been what it might —a trouble, more than likely, that they had brought upon themselves by their own disregard of His statutes. Some *delay* there may have been in His interposition, but delay did not imply reluctance. Help came in time to fend off disaster.

(3) The great *promptitude* of God in answering prayer impresses us. We thought that, seeing how *slow* had been the asking—so slow as to excite a suspicion of unwillingness to be under obligation to Him for any favor—He would be equally slow in responding to appeals made in the last extremity, made after relief had been vainly sought in every other quarter.

It is natural for us to pray in such an exigency, as did the psalmist, "*In the day when I call, answer me speedily.*" No matter how long God has waited on us, and how much we have tried Him by our slowness in asking,

yet we wish Him to be *speedy* in His answers.

But in all the inspired record of answered prayer we have discovered no disposition on God's part to turn the tables on men, and treat them as they have treated Him. In every case, where, in a crisis, the need was urgent, God came quickly to the rescue. Nay, in instances not a few, *before* there was a call He answered, and while the suppliant was yet speaking He heard. And we infer, that, in this respect also, God is without variableness or shadow of turning; and that, if the case is urgent, He will now, as in all the past, answer *speedily;* taking no risks by deferring until to-morrow that which may be better done to-day.

(4) We note again in the record, *the large excess of benefit* conferred in God's answers to prayer above the asking. In every instance where He did what was asked, it might have been said, He did "*exceeding abundantly above all that was asked or thought.*"

And that, presumably, is still God's manner of answering prayer. He surprises us by the excess of the benefit conferred. By way of sample, take this from the Epistle of James: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,

anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; *and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*"

(5) It is noteworthy, that, in the exceptional instances where the answers to prayer were "nay," instead of "yea," *there was no inclusion of the prayer for mercy, offered by any sinful soul.* To such a prayer He never said, "nay." On the contrary, He took special pains to impress upon the minds of men the saving truth that He was *ready to pardon,* and that He *took pleasure in such as hoped in His mercy.* (Ps. 147:11.)

The record of answered prayer in both Testaments, is such as to inspire that hope. God has said nothing and done nothing to discourage any sinful man from applying to Him for forgiveness. In every such case, the record under the Old Dispensation, as under the New, is to the effect, that the man who, standing afar off, lifts not so much as his eyes to heaven, but smiting upon his breast, exclaims, "*God be merciful to me a sinner,*" goes down to his house *justified.*

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